The experience and expertise
- More than 50 years of successful operation since 1958
- ISO 9001:2008 certification for quality management
- State-of-the-Art manufacturing facilities, meeting US FDA/UK MHRA requirements
- Currently exporting to 37 countries

The leadership
- Leader of domestic pharma market since 1985
- 1st company from Bangladesh to obtain UK MHRA approval

The commitment
- Ensuring better life through quality medicine
- Strict compliance to WHO cGMP standards

The vision
- Healthcare solutions at an affordable price
WE RISE TOGETHER.
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The National Anthem: Amar Shonar Bangla (My Golden Bengal)

My Bengal of gold, I love you.
Forever your skies, your air set my heart in tune as if it were a flute,
In spring, oh mother mine, the fragrance from your mango-groves makes me wild with joy-
Ah, what a thrill!
In Autumn, oh mother mine, in the full blossomed paddy field,
I have seen spread all over sweet – smiles!
Ah, what a beauty, what shades, what an affection, and what tenderness!
What a quilt have you spread at the feet of banyan trees and along the banks of rivers!
Oh mother mine, words from your lips are like nectar to my ears!
Ah, what a thrill!
If sadness, oh mother mine, casts a gloom on your face, my eyes are filled with tears!

Original in Bangla by Rabindranath Tagore.
Translated by Professor Syed Ali Ahsan
Chief Patron
H.E. Mr. Akramul Qader
Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States of America

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Bangladesh at a glance

Official Name
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Capital
Dhaka

Currency
Taka (BDT)

Geography

Area
55,598 sq miles (1,47,570 Sq.Km)

Comparative
Slightly smaller than the state of Iowa or Wisconsin

Location
South Asia, On three sides: East, North & West –India, South-East: Myanmar, South: Bay of Bengal

Land boundary
4,246 km

Bordering Countries
India: 4,053 km, Myanmar: 193 km

Climate
Tropical: mild Winter (October to March): Summer (March to June): Rainy Monsoon (June to October)

Temperature
High- 104 degrees (during summer) Fahrenheit, low 40 degrees (in winter)

Terrain
Mostly flat alluvial plain; hilly in the South-East

Standard Time
GMT +6 hours

People

Population size
142.319 million (2011, BBS)

Comparative
Bangladesh ranks 7th in terms of population size. Have more people than Russia.

Language
Bangla (5th most spoken language in the world, about 250 million people speak Bangla)

Main Religions
Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity.

Male-Female Ratio
100: 100.3 (2011, BBS)
Population Density/sq.km
964 (2011, BBS)

Crude Birth Rate
Crude Birth Rate 22.53 (Per 1000 Population in 2012)

Crude Death Rate
Crude Death Rate 5.71 ( Per 1000 Population in 2012)

Rate of Poverty (%)
31.5% (2011)

Governance

Governance
Parliamentary democracy

Legal system
Based on English common law

Suffrage
18 years of age: universal

Constitution
Written form

Head of Government
Prime Minister

Head of State
President

Education and Health

Primary education
Compulsory and universal

School enrolment (%)

Life expectancy at birth
68.21 years (male), 71.98 years (female) (2012)

Literacy rate (%)
55.9 (UNDP 2011)

Infant Mortality rate
50.73 (per 1000 Live Birth), (Below 1 year of age), 2010

Total Fertility rate per Women (15-49)
2.4 (2006)

Persons per Hospital Bed
(including Dispensary)
1860 (2008)

Persons Per Registered Physician
2860 (2008)

Safe Drinking Water User (%)
97.6 (2006)

Sanitary Latrine User (%)
52.6 (2006)

Economy

Size of GDP
100.00 billion US $ (2010-11)

Share of GDP
Agriculture: 18.4%, Industry:28.6%, Services: 53% (2011)
Rate of GDP growth
6.7% (2010-11)

Foreign Currency Reserve
US $ 10.98 Billion (November 2011)

Current account balance
US $ 952 million (2007-08)

Per capita GDP
US $ 664 (2010-2011)

Per capita National income
US $ 750 (2011)

Domestic savings
18.99 (as % of GDP, 2009-10)

National savings
28.75 (as % of GDP, 2009-10)

Total investment
24.96 (Public-4.77, Private-20.19) (as % of GDP, 2009-10)

Foreign Direct Investment
US $.913 Billion (2010)

Total number of Export Processing Zones (EPZ)
08

Total investments in EPZs
1935.86 million US $ (2011)

Export earnings
US $ 16 billion (2009-10)

Exports-commodities
Ready Made Garments (RMG), Leather, Frozen Fish, Sea Food, Pharmaceuticals, Cements, Jute and Jute Goods, etc.

Exports-partners
US 24.9%, Germany 12.8%, UK 9.8%, France 5% (2006)

Imports-partners
China 17.7%, India 12.5%, Kuwait 7.9%, Singapore 5.5%, Hong Kong 4.1% (2006)

Import payments
9.00 billion (oct-dec, 2011)

Agriculture-products

Industries
Garments, Spinning, Ship building, Textiles, Jute, Tea processing, Newsprint, Cement, Fertilizer, Light engineering, Sugar, Ceramic, Fish processing, IT solutions, Pharmaceuticals.

Debt –external
$ 20.25 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Market size
Even a conservative estimate presents a growing middle class of 30 million people (15 to 20% of total pop.), which is bigger than the combined population of Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore.

Endowment
In addition to huge reserve of natural gas, Bangladesh has a pool of easily trainable human resources. Cost of operation, both in terms of tariffs and wages, is one of the lowest in the world.

Fiscal year
1 July – 30 June

Society

Structure
Liberal Democratic Society

Personality of people
Warm and hospitable

Seaport
Chittagong and Mongla

International Airports
Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet

Domestic Airports
Jossore, Cox’s bazaar, Saidpur, Rajshahi and Barisal

Radio and Television
Transmission covers the entire country. Numerous private channels are in operation.

Telephone per 100 people (BBS: 2010)
Land phone- 2.07
Cell phone- 63.74

Internet
Broadband, easily available, connected to submarine cable

Popular sports
Football, Cricket, Hockey, Kabadi, Swimming, Chess

Tourist attraction
World’s longest unbroken 120 km, sea- beach of Cox’s Bazar, Colorful tribal life of hill tracts, centuries old historical sites. (Some are pilgrimage of Buddhists, Hindus etc.) at Dhaka, Paharpur, Mainamati, Mohastangar; Sundarbans-the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger and largest mangrove forest in the world (a world heritage site), Beautiful Tea Gardens, River life etc.
Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
On the occasion of our great Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the countrymen living at home and abroad.

The historic Independence Day is a glorious day in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished Independence through nine-month long struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions. On this solemn day, I pay my deep homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the war of liberation in 1971. I pray to the Almighty for the salvation of those departed immortal souls.

On this very memorable day, I recall with profound respect the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country's Independence on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, the courageous people from all walks of life participated in the war of liberation and achieved victory through armed struggle. I also recall with deep respect our four National Leaders; valiant freedom-fighters and organizers who rendered their dedicated efforts and enthusiastic support that accelerated the achievement of our victory. I also remember with deep respect the contributions of late Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haque, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Abdul Hamid Bhasani towards inspiring our people at various stage of struggle. The contributions of those valiant sons of the soil would be ever written in the history of our Independence.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned Independence was to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the Government is rendering untiring efforts in materializing the objectives of Independence. With the span of time, we have achieved some significant progresses in the field of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, ICT, youth, women and children, women empowerment etc. at national level. The Government is also very sincere to establish Rule of Law, Human Rights in the country and institutionalize democracy. Our achievement at international arena is also notable. Despite attaining the progress, we have to go a long way for achieving the desired goals of independence. I believe concerted efforts from all are imperative in this regard.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the people of our country are democracy-loving. Without making institutionalization of democracy, the overall development is hard to attain. Tolerance, fortitude and respectful to other’s opinion are the pre-conditions for flourishing democracy. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to maintain patience, forbearance at all level and to be respectful to other's opinion in a democratic pluralism. Let us make our National Parliament as a centre of excellence in solving our national issues through discussion. I am confident, all irrespective of party affiliation would play responsible role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of our common people by playing their due role.

The present Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has declared ‘Vision 2021’ with a view to attaining ‘Golden Bangla’ dreamt by Bangabandhu. I believe people from all strata of life would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh by materializing the ‘Vision’ at the Golden Jubilee of Independence in 2021.

On this Independence Day, I urge all, living at home and abroad, to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of war of liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic as we are committed to building a respectful, happy and prosperous Bangladesh for our next generation.

May the Almighty be with us.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.
I convey my heartiest greetings to my countrymen as well as to all expatriate Bangalees on the occasion of the great Independence and National Day 2011.

The greatest Bangalee of all time, father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh through the wireless of the then EPR at the first hour of March the 26th in 1971 when Pakistani occupation forces launched genocide on unarmed Bangalees on the fatal night of the 25th March 1971. With the proclamation, a sovereign, independent state, Bangladesh has come into being in the world map. After a 9-month of bloody war under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, we earned the ultimate victory on the 16th December, 1971.

On this glorious day, I pay my homage to the three million heroic sons, who sacrificed their lives, and 200 thousand women, who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation.

I recall with deep gratitude the great leader of our liberation struggle, the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

I also pay my humble tribute to the four national leaders Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Najrul Islam, Capt M Monsur Ali and AHM Kamrujjaman, who led the war under directive of Bangabandhu.

I pay my homage to the valiant freedom fighters, and my sincere sympathies go to the wounded war veterans. My sympathies also go to those who lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture and subjugation during the war. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

On the eve of our Independence Day, I urge countrymen to remain alert against the conspiracies of anti-democratic forces. The defeated anti-liberation, communal and identified reactionary forces are out to undo the democratic and development process of our beloved country as our government has taken steps to start the trial of war criminals. I urge the countrymen to foil all ill-designed plots against the country and the people.

The independence earned through huge bloodbath and sacrifice is our greatest achievement. To make this achievement meaningful, we have to devote ourselves in nation-building activities being imbued with the spirit of our great liberation war. By cherishing the true history of our liberation war close to our hearts, we have to go ahead in achieving the objective of the ‘charter of change’. The new generation has to be enlightened with the true history of our Liberation War.

We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty, hunger-and illiteracy-free, progressive and democratic country by 2021, the Golden Jubilee year of our independence. I call upon every Bangalee to join this noble endeavour with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication being inspired with the spirit of patriotism.

With our united efforts, Insha-Allah, we would surely achieve our ‘Golden Bangladesh’ as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

Joi Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina
Today is the historic Independence and National Day of Bangladesh. Forty years ago, on this day, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation declared Bangladesh an independent and sovereign country. This declaration marked the culmination of our epic struggle for an independent entity. On this great Day, I extend my warmest felicitations and greetings to all Bangladesh nationals living at home and abroad.

I recall with profound respect our undisputed leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, our four national leaders, Sayed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahamad, M. Mansur Ali, A.H.M Kamaruzzaman who steered our heroic war of liberation. I pay deep tributes to the valiant freedom fighters and the martyrs whose sacrifices have led us to our independence. I also salute those brave women, the biranganas, who were subjected to heinous form of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since our independence in 1971, Bangladesh has evolved significantly. We have established a tolerant, pluralistic and egalitarian society, an inclusive democracy and gained recognition from the world community. Bangladesh today is one of the 11 emerging economies in the world, after Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC). Bangladesh is a role model for fighting poverty and extremism, empowering women, disaster management and in coping with the challenges posed by global climate change. For more than two decades, Bangladesh remains a frontline contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions across the globe.

After the historic December elections in 2008, which brought the democratic and secular forces to office with sweeping majority of the Parliament, Bangladesh is now witnessing rapid transformation under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Our country is making remarkable strides in various sectors. Its impressive achievement particularly in the social sector continues to receive recognition in the international community. The winning of MDG Award by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during the 65th UNGA for achieving targeted reduction in infant mortality is a testimony in this regard. The Hon'ble Prime Minister announced Vision 2021 to transform Bangladesh into a Digital Bangladesh and to graduate Bangladesh to a middle-income country by the time we will be celebrating the golden Jubilee of our Independence. Our government has also taken various steps to implement these goals. Needless to say, in this onerous task, Bangladesh would need the support of the international community including the members of our diaspora.

Present government under the leadership of Bangabandhu’s daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to establish the values and aspirations of the war of independence. After assuming office on 6 January 2009, we have been trying relentlessly to establish a society based on Rule of Law, strengthen democratic institutions, uphold human rights and ensure good governance. The present Government remains committed to bring the alleged war criminals to justice and I would like to reiterate that the initiative stems from our policy to establish Rule of Law and end the culture of impunity and in no way an act of vendetta. I take this opportunity to reiterate to all including the international community that the trial would be carried out in line with the international standard.

On foreign policy issues, the Government has been consistent in pursuing the policy in line with the motto “friendship to all and malice towards none” as envisioned by the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh now enjoys excellent relations with the outside world due to our principled position. Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the friendly countries including our neighbours have expanded in depth and dimension, and I hope that it will be improved further in the coming days. Bangladesh is happy to be one of the hosts of the ICC, and this also manifests the credibility and credentials Bangladesh enjoys among the international community. Bangladesh’s election to a large number of UN and international bodies bears the testimony of the trust Bangladesh continues to enjoy in the comity of nations.

I wish to highlight here that our diaspora comprises an important element in our foreign policy objectives. The
Government is committed to ensure their all-out welfare. Despite serious logistical and economic constraints, the Government, under special directives from Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, recently took swift action, not only to repatriate thousands of Bangladesh nationals but also to ensure the welfare of those who were distressed following political upheavals in some countries. More importantly, we have been able to address the situation promptly with the assistance of the international community without compromising our bilateral relations with the affected countries.

I wish to thank all the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad who have devoted themselves to achieving our foreign policy goals. I take this opportunity to congratulate Bangladesh diaspora who are immensely contributing to the buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as to their host countries.

On this great Day, let us renew our commitment to turn Bangladesh into a country free from poverty, free of hunger and extremism. I urge all our citizens including our diaspora to come forward to achieve this goal.

Joy Bangla
Joy Bangabandhu

(Dr. Dipu Moni, MP)
From the Desk of the Ambassador

On the auspicious occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh, I wish to extend my sincere felicitations and greetings to our friends in the USA and to all the expatriate Bangladesh nationals living in this great country.

As we celebrate this historic Day, I would like to pay profound respect for those valiant sons and fallen heroes of the soil who made supreme sacrifices to make us a free nation. Let me also pay my deep respect to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had steered our heroic war of liberation.

Every year in March, as we commemorate our National and Independence Day, Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC publishes Vibrant Bangladesh. The publication includes articles from renowned scholars, businessmen, diplomats and academicians, focusing on the country's rich tradition and culture and achievements in different socio-economic sectors. This is the 4th consecutive edition. We are very happy that this year we have incorporated articles by Mr. Richard K. Taylor who played a crucial role to draw attention of the US media and thereby drawing public attention to the cause of Bangladesh's freedom in 1971. He along with his wife Phyllis Taylor’s name has become an integral part of our epic history. We are also very pleased that Meg Millward Blood, wife of late Mr. Archer K Blood has put in a message and their son Mr. Peter Blood contributed an article for this edition of Vibrant Bangladesh. Mr. Archer Blood while working as Consul General of USA in Dhaka had witnessed the unfolding of Bangladesh’s journey to liberation in March 71. His dissenting cables to the State Department brought misery for himself, but his name will be remembered as long as Bangladesh lives. His son Mr. Peter Blood, though very young at that time, had memories of a people who were inherently secular and were struggling to uphold the ethos of democracy and freedom. These contributions by three great friends of Bangladesh have made this publication very special.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our glorious independence, there are reasons to speak proudly of the ethos of democracy and development and have been successful in establishing a pluralistic and inclusive society where democratic governance and institutional justice have taken a firm root. Bangladesh has received international acclaims for her leadership role in the fields of fighting poverty and extremism, empowering women, disaster management, climate change negotiations, and international peace-keeping. In the economic front, Bangladesh has been able to consistently maintain a GDP growth rate of roughly six percent over the last two decades. Despite the global financial meltdown in many parts of the world, the macro-economic base of the country remains strong. It shows the resilience and maturity of the economy as well as the trust and confidence it enjoys among the business leaders both at home and abroad.

Today, under the dynamic leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has set specific targets for graduating our nation into a middle-income country by the year 2021 when we will be celebrating the golden jubilee of our independence. We are also working to transform Bangladesh into a Digital Bangladesh. In that trajectory of development, we need support from our friends and development partners, particularly the USA.

Bangladesh and the USA enjoy excellent bilateral relations based on shared values and ethos. Over the years, this relationship expanded in depth and dimensions across a variety of fronts such as economic development, poverty alleviation, education, health, regional partnership, and fighting the menace of extremism. Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world that is partnering with the United States on the four global initiatives of the US President: food security, global health, global climate change, and engagement with Muslim communities. Bangladesh looks forward to continuing engagements with the USA to further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries.

In this special publication, we have made a modest attempt to highlight different aspects of Bangladesh’s rich history and culture as well as to address a number of issues related to socio-economic development of the country. In our endeavour, we have received tremendous support from our friends and well-wishers both in Bangladesh and the USA. I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the esteemed contributors of articles, sponsors, and others involved in publishing this edition of the Vibrant Bangladesh.
The land that is today Bangladesh has a history going back millennia and a culture that has roots in pre-history. Successive political changes have influenced the life and life-style of communities here which, in turn, is reflected in the creative genius of contemporary times. There is an organic time-line in the evolution of Bangladesh art all the way through into the modern mainstream. Contemporary art in Bangladesh, therefore, draws as much from heritage as from global trends.

Archaeological relics indicate a rich tradition in terracotta. Be it the portrayal of everyday contemporary experience or mythological icons and deities in temples and monasteries, or floral arabesques in mosques, many would consider terracotta embellishments as a distinctive trait of architecture of this land. Another major trait dates back to the Pala era (8th-12th Century AD) illustrations on clothing, palm leaves and hand-made papers. These were characterized by harmony and delicate decorative lines that are today considered among the signature characters of Bangladesh art. Alpanas (stylised geometric and floral designs or folk motifs) for festive occasions and pato-chitra (depicting lores and legends on folded screens) are notable elements of Bengali folk art that have become internalised into the mainstream “urban” tradition of today.
The roots of modern art in Bangladesh are traced, as indeed, also the beginnings of modern Indian art, to the Calcutta Government School of Art, established by the British Raj in 1864. The Bengal School, spearheaded by Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), was instrumental in re-introducing the ancient and medieval Indian styles in art. Outside the Bengal School, Jamini Roy’s (1887-1972) works have defined some of the permanent elements of Bangladesh art.

The modern art movement in Bangladesh was pioneered by Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin (1914-1976), Anwarul Huq (1918-1980), Qamrul Hassan (1921-1988), Safiuddin Ahmed (b.1922), Khwaja Shafiq Ahmed (1925-1972), and a few others who had all studied and trained at the Calcutta Art School. They moved to Dhaka after the Partition of India in 1947; and the following year, established what is popularly known as the Dhaka Art College (presently Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka).

The influence of the Bengal Renaissance notwithstanding, these masters brought a distinctive accent in the art of Bangladesh. From the very beginning, their works were shorn of mythological themes, and although they retained a fascination for folk art forms and motifs, it was more a celebration of the rural rather than nostalgia for some by-gone folk. Modern art in Bangladesh was also very secular for two reasons. One, the reinvention of the ancient and the mythological in the context of Indian nationalism was quite pertinent in British India, but had little relevance in post-Partition eastern Bengal. On the other hand, the appeal of folk art forms and indigenous traditions worked as a tool against religious inhibitions concerning art in general in post-partition Pakistan. Works by this first generation of artists, therefore, celebrated rural subjects and themes for their worth - passionately with bold strokes and bright colours.

Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, the doyen of the movement is best known for his famous famine sketches and his masterful scrolls that convey a vibrant epic character. In his later days, Zainul took to figurative abstractions accentuated again by the power and value of design in his compositions. Qamrul Hasan found his pulse in the native style and the powerful expression of the patuas. Sensuality of the female figure has featured in many of his major works. He has also done landscapes that bring to life this monsoon country. Safiuddin Ahmed initially worked in woodcut and etchings. After his sojourn in the UK, he concentrated on pure geometric abstractions. One other major artist of the 1940s was S.M. Sultan, whose early works are not readily available. However, after a long reclusive spell, he reappeared in the 1980s, working with natural dyes and colours. He celebrated the peasantry and depicted them on his canvas as powerful protagonists of human civilization.

The first batch of the Dhaka Art College formed the next crop of artists. This generation was predictably varied and diverse—in the choice of figurative expression, the breadth of imagination and the potential of plastic value in their works. Muhammad Kibria had a natural inclination for semi abstract composition, which was transformed after his Japan phase into the wholly abstract. In Hamidur Rahman, we find the add-on of extraneous elements for effect. Aminul Islam studied mosaics and...
murals and worked principally in semi-abstract expressionistic mode. Murtaja Baseer has moved from paintings to murals and stained glass and again back to painting. Rashid Chowdhury’s paintings had surrealist overtones, but his training in tapestry in France shifted his focus to simple decorative designs. Others of the same generation, working predominantly with abstract and semi-abstract forms, include Qayyum Chowdhury, Abdur Razzaque, Syed Jahangir, Debdas Chakraborty, Kazi Abdul Baset, Samarjit Roy Choudhury and Abu Taher.

Coming after them, but predating the War of Liberation, we have a good number of prolific artists who have created their own individual style and vocabulary. This group includes Hashem Khan, Rafiquan Nabi, Monirul Islam, Mahmudul Huq, Anwar Jahan, Abul Barq Alvi and Hamiduzzaman Khan.

After the independence of Bangladesh, there was a new surge of creativity. There was a natural rediscovery of tradition and the indigenous. A new generation of artists emerged - they adopted a more figurative vocabulary and tried enthusiastically to create an interface between the traditional and the contemporary. As artists of a new independent country, they also had a new kind of exposure that facilitated their creative pursuit. This group of the 1970s included a good number of sculptors and print makers. Kalidas Karmakar, Shahid Kabir, Abdus Shakoor, Kazi Ghiyas, Monsur-Ul Karim, Chandra Shekhar Dey, Alakesh Ghosh, Shahabuddin, Nazlee Laila Mansur, Alak Roy. K.M.A. Quayyum Farida Zaman, Ranjit Das and Mohammad Eunus are among the notables.

Artists of the 1980s tried to use tradition and heritage in a more subtle way. There was greater contact with global trends. They have tended towards non-figurative, semi abstract modes of expression. Some have even acquired a post-modern vocabulary - there is infusion of fantasy, humour and the absurd. The 1990s have been hectic. Possibilities became endless as synergies were established between technology and art. Painting and sculpture and even the performing arts, appeared to lose their distinctiveness and became complementary. The same trend continued into the opening years of the new century. If break-up of form described the 1980s and the early 1990s, for the latter 1990s and the beginning of the new century, the mantra is reconstruction. Qayyum Chowdhury celebrates the Bangladesh landscape in an inimitable blend of the intense and the sublime. The War of Liberation comes alive in his works, and he can be credited for creating the signature image of the freedom fighter. Samarjit Roy Choudhury delves in the abstract, shepherding our visual sensibility towards subtle discoveries. Hashem Khan has a magic touch with illustrations. His forte’ as an accomplished artist is borne by the fact that he brings to his extensive work in book illustration characteristic embellishments, and introductions of, for instance, linear interventions that add value to the aesthetic experience. Rafiquan Nabi is best known as the creator of Tokai, a popular cartoon character that has for the last four decades provided a perceptive commentary on society. As an artist, his credentials, however, are much more exhaustive with flawless competence in most media. Monirul Islam is nostalgic in his themes and brinks on the romantic. A celebrated maestro in Spain, he divides his time between Madrid and Dhaka. He is pronouncedly ingenious in technique, and excels in etching in aquatint. Mahmudul Huq draws extensively from personal insight. Like other painters of the 1960s, he has engaged in discovering the potentials of the abstract, employing different methods and techniques. Despite that his works still exude the
fragrance of the monsoon so characteristic of this deltaic land. Shahid Kabir is reflective and finds inspiration in the mystic bauls of Bengal, Laloo in particular. His works are expressionistic brinking on the realistic - powerful, with a youthful vigour. Farida Zaman responds intensely to social realities. She employs forms and a generous play of colours but stops short of realistic work. Her abstract themes, like many of her contemporaries, reflect a plebeian social consciousness as opposed to the intellectual. Rokeya Sultana is powerful even in the unaccentuated treatment of the images and imagery she creates. Her themes are intensely feminine, without the anger, and pronouncedly sublime. Kanak Chanpa Chakma celebrates colours. Her themes centering round the life and lifestyle of the hill people in South-eastern Bangladesh are inspiring. Beyond ethnic themes, her works draw from the everyday experience of urban existence. Dilara Begum Jolly hovers between the realistic and the surrealistic, with a penchant for packing contemporary meaning into mythological images. Mohammad Iqbal belongs to a generation that pushes the frontiers of aesthetics in newer directions. He is characterized by an economy of expression and lends to a deeper introspective realism.

Today, Bangladesh art is characterized by tremendous creative surge, diversity and vitality. Artists have rediscovered themselves and invented newer individual forte. There is a discernibly increased activity in sculpture and murals. Sculptors have also begun to move on in the choice of material and in the execution of their work. Print making continues to draw prolific artists. Installations and digital art, not to speak of multimedia, have offered artists newer directions for fuller expression of their creative genius. There is constant infusion of interesting and refreshing works that testify to the ease and facility of our new artists as much as the capacity of others to constantly evolve. Opening of private galleries and the numerous exhibitions that are on at any point in time have seen an enhanced interest in the arts and a general increase in both corporate and individual patronage. Institutional contacts between artists at home and abroad, and participation in exhibitions, workshops and residencies constantly impact contemporary trends and define directions for tomorrow.

Mr. Mijarul Quayes is the Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh. The views expressed in the article are those of the writer and do not reflect the position either of the Government of Bangladesh.
My thoughts turn often to the valiant people of Bangladesh. My husband and I, and our lively family of four, were honored to walk with you at two very different phases as your country came into being.

Archer K. Blood was a lifelong student of history and international affairs. He was fully confident that Bangladesh would eventually win its independence from the Pakistan’s West Wing so different in every way from it, and so it did, and in our time.

Now I look back through the haze of suffering which brought about in my husband’s words, the bright shiny reality of independence. I see today, this dynamic city of Dhaka, developing in so many directions. My congratulations go to a stalwart, yet poetic people with a wish for continued advancement.

Archer K. Blood was a diplomat of experience, by nature and interest an historian, a humanitarian and a visionary. He saw the sun rise on Bangladesh when the struggle for freedom was won.
It seems that for most of my life I’ve been thinking about Bangladesh - its history, its liberation struggle, its emergence... I was only eight years old, when in the early 1960s, my family was posted to Dhaka, in what was then known as the East Wing of Pakistan or East Pakistan. Yet my recollections are vivid of those two years in Dhaka during my father’s first diplomatic posting there. It was a period during which all the members of my family forged deep, lifelong friendships with Bengalis from all walks of life. It was, borrowing words from my father, Archer K Blood, in his book, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh, the beginning of the long “bittersweet romance” the Blood family has had with Bangladesh.

While much of my time as a child in East Pakistan was spent with my Bengali friends, playing cricket or softball, flying kites, or bicycling down the busy roads of Dhaka, a couple of memories stand out that would eerily point to darker things to come. It was during the early years of General Ayub Khan’s tenure and his appointed General Officer Commanding and Martial Law Administrator in East Pakistan, would often invite my parents to witness impressive military parades held at the Dhaka cantonment. I would occasionally accompany my parents to view these displays of military prowess. The Pakistan Army, disproportionately West Pakistani in makeup would, during in my father’s second tour to Dhaka in 1971, turn with a vengeance
on the Bengalis of the East Wing. Politically, though not apparent to me at that young age, the seeds of discontent had already been growing for some time in East Pakistan for the economic, cultural, and political disparities between the two wings of Pakistan had never been fully addressed. Interestingly, the ripple effect of this disparity would be far reaching enough even to interfere with the all-American USIS theatrical production of the Bengali Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore’s play “The Post Office” in which my then 10 year old sister Shirin played a role. Although the play was enthusiastically received by Bengali audiences in Dhaka and Mymensingh, further performances of the play were abruptly cancelled by the government.

No official explanation of the cancellation was given but West Pakistani suspicions of the close cultural bonds between Bengalis of West Bengal in India and East Pakistan surely was a factor.

The disparities and inequalities between the two wings were, in fact, apparent almost from the birth of Pakistan. The bifurcated, and in Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s words “moth eaten” Pakistan that emerged at the time of India’s partition in August 1947, was separated by 1,600 kilometers of territory held by India. The people of the two wings were divided not only geographically but ethnically, linguistically, and culturally as well. Some observers even commented on a temperamental difference in the interpretations of Islam practiced in the two wings, maintaining that a Bengali “monsoon Islam” of the East Wing contrasted with the “desert Islam” of the West Wing. The East Wing, characterized by its Bengali ethnic homogeneity and its deep rooted Bangla cultural and linguistic heritage, was the more populous wing and stood in contrast to the ethnic heterogeneity of the West Wing. The founding vision of a united Pakistan held together by a common new nation was weakened by key factors impeding its democratic development. The new nation of Pakistan did not have disciplined political parties, a participatory mass electorate, and it lacked a consensus between the wings over Islamic provisions for the nation’s governance. The initial imposition of Urdu as the national language was also much resented by Bengalis. All these differences were exacerbated by the systemic economic exploitation of the East Wing by the West. Under the second-class political and economic status it had been accorded vis a vis West Pakistan, robust economic development in the East Wing was elusive and never fully realized.

In the years leading up to the liberation war of Bangladesh, it was apparent that the East Wing had not benefited greatly during Ayub Khan’s (1958--1969) “Decade of Progress”. Ayub’s idea of “democracy from above” as embodied in his “Basic Democracies” was often seen as a form of “representational dictatorship”. Bengalis from East Wing, despite their numerical preponderance, were frustrated that their voice was not adequately heard. The two wings also shared a different outlook on foreign affairs, with West Pakistan remaining resolutely antagonistic towards India, especially over the disputed state of Kashmir while in the East Wing this issue was not a prime concern, with Bengalis retaining their close cultural bonds with the Indian state of West Bengal.

I did not accompany my parents on their second, fateful tour in East Pakistan but I did manage to visit them briefly in Dhaka during the summer of 1970 following my graduation from high school in Greece and my summer travels in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the former Soviet Union. After I left
Dhaka and headed off to France for my first year in college, my communication with my parents became sporadic at best for during this period of time events were unfurling at a rapid pace in East Pakistan.

In early 1970, when my father returned to East Pakistan to begin his second tour in Dhaka, this time as US Consul General, the political landscape had changed considerably since his first tour. In 1969 Ayub’s Basic Democracies had collapsed and he was forced to resign following rioting in both wings against his regime’s perceived corruption and the widely perceived feeling that Ayub was responsible for the humiliating defeat in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War over Kashmir—a military gambit in the eyes of Bengalis that put the security of the East Wing at risk. Ayub was forced to resign and was succeeded by Army Commander-in Chief General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan who as martial law administrator and president, would be unfortunate enough to preside over two cataclysmic events in Pakistan’s history: the defeat of Pakistan’s armed forces by India and the secession of East Pakistan. Although Yahya in July 1969 promised a return to civilian rule, appointed an election commissioner and promised elections within eighteen months, rising expectations would not be fulfilled and the worst was yet to come.

In November 1970, the horrendous cyclone and tidal wave of November 1970-- “nature’s fury”-- struck the people of the East Wing claiming the lives of more than a quarter million Bengalis. The widespread perception among Bengalis was that much of the foreign aid slated for the East Wing was held up or siphoned off to the West Wing. Mujib, speaking to a crowd at a November 26th conference in Dhaka spoke to the people of “Bangladesh”, not East Pakistan, noting that Bengalis were indebted to those countries that came to their rescue in their hour of need, and issuing these memorable words: “the generous assistance received from abroad only underlines the tardiness and callousness of our own rulers……the textile millionaires have not given a yard of cloth for our shrouds. They have a huge army, but it is left to British marines to bury our dead.” The tremendous outpouring of foreign assistance and vigorous relief efforts by the United States and other nations served only to overshadow the inadequate response and performance of the Government of Pakistan to flood and cyclone. My father wrote years later that “the real tragedy of the inadequate West Pakistan response was that Yahya had been offered a golden opportunity to bring the two wings together in the mutual enterprise of disaster relief but had muffed the chance.” In the following month Pakistan’s first nationwide direct elections were held-- the first in Pakistan to be conducted on the basis of universal suffrage promising a welcome restoration of civilian rule after years of military government. The East Pakistani Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman campaigning on a platform calling for...
maximum provincial autonomy, won virtually all the seats allotted in the East Wing, thereby assuming a majority in the national legislature. Sheikh Mujib’s prediction of a massive Awami League victory was accurate, with his party picking up 160 National Assembly seats and 288 Provincial Assembly seats out of 162 and 300 seats respectively. In West Pakistan, Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party won 81 out of the 138 seats. The election of 1970, produced a dominant party in each wing but with neither party showing any strength in the other wing and the platforms standing starkly at odds with each other. Illustrative of the differences between the two platforms was Mujib’s desire to normalize relations with India, while Bhutto had promised a “thousand year war with India. In terms of governance, Mujib strove for considerable autonomy for the East Wing while Bhutto maintained that the need for a strong central government was not open to negotiation. Ultimately, three main protagonists in this drama-Yahya, Mujib, and Bhutto became fixed in their positions: Mujib’s insisting on the implementation of his 6 Point Plan for increased autonomy (essentially seen as a manifesto for separatism in West Pakistan); Yahya insisting on strict adherence to the terms the Legal Framework under which the elections were held; and Bhutto, refusing to play second fiddle to any other politician, most especially Mujib. He threatened that he would raise all of West Pakistan “from the Khyber to Karachi” in violent protest if the National Assembly should be convened as scheduled on March 3rd. Yahya had little room to maneuver-if he went along with Mujib’s wishes, and adhered to the March 3rd date of convening the National Assembly, upheaval in West Pakistan was likely; if he yielded to Bhutto’s threat he could face outright declaration of independence in the East Wing. Ultimately, it was the West Pakistani politicians, led by the Pakistan People’s Party’s Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and supported by the army, who were successful in pressuring Yahya to postpone the convening of the National Assembly.

With the postponement, Bengalis of East Pakistan were in open revolt and events unfurled with ferocity. Bengalis of East Pakistan revolted openly, the Pakistan martial law regime of Yahya banned the Awami League and Mujib, and on March 25, 1971, the Pakistan army launched Operation Searchlight, a massive and ruthless crackdown. Following so soon after the cyclone came “man’s fury”---- the violent crackdown and savage repression that followed in which countless Bengalis were killed and untold numbers of women violated. An estimated 10 million Bengali refugees fled to India, thereby making the likelihood of a military intervention by India all but certain.

My father would write in his memoirs, that this was the most horrible month of his life. He noted, just as December 7, 1971, is remembered by Americans in the words Franklin Deleanor Roosevelt, as a “day that would live on in infamy,” so too should the night of March 25, 1971 live on in the annals of the young nation of Bangladesh as a “night of infamy.” Pakistani troops were quickly deployed to neutralize potential Bengali centers of resistance. From the rooftop of their home, my

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Sheikh Mujib’s prediction of a massive Awami League victory was accurate, with his party picking up 160 National Assembly seats and 288 Provincial Assembly seats.

* some wording has been taken from The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoir of An American Diplomat by Archer K. Blood. The University Press Limited, Dhaka (first published 2002).
parents could see the constant flash of tracer bullets across the evening sky and hear the discordant sounds of machine guns and tank fire. As reports of wanton killings came in, my father and his colleagues began to send a series of cables to the US Embassy in Islamabad and the Department of State—cables decrying the "selective genocide" against the Hindu minority, cables describing the targeted execution of professors and attacks against students at Dhaka University, and other cables that told of reports of numerous atrocities that were soon occurring throughout the province—cables with graphic and detailed reports of a vicious military action.

The writer Douglas Kerr in an eloquent appreciation of my father published in the Foreign Service Journal wrote: “As the political crisis darkened and deepened, Blood struggled to have his voice heard above the din of obfuscation and temporization arising from Embassy Islamabad and the White House. He experienced mounting frustration as he sought to nudge his superiors into action. It must have felt like trying to push a piece of string.......” Kerr, who lived in Bangladesh when I visited in 2005, first became interested in the subject of genocide in the twentieth century some years before while living in Warsaw. Kerr’s FSJ article played a part in catalyzing a reassessment of my father’s role in opposing inhumanity and standing up to Washington’s errant policy, as well as a reconsideration of my father’s treatment by the Nixon administration, that culminated in the US Embassy’s decision to re-name the American Center Library posthumously in my father’s honor.

The anguished yet eloquent series of cables my father and his colleagues at the US Consulate General in Dhaka sent back to Washington, did eventually help raise the alarm of a senseless and spreading massacre, but were initially answered by an official silence that my father described as “deafening.” This response from Washington or rather lack of it, was perplexing to the US diplomats at the US Consulate General in Dhaka and to some alarmed South Asian hands back at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. They did not know that the rather imperial administration in Washington, DC at that time had chosen to pursue a strategy of employing Pakistan as a secret backdoor to establish détente with China—a strategy that was all too willing to overlook the human element and the democratic striving of a people in the face of terror and great odds. Reflecting on these events—when the truth emerged—Americans from all walks of life rallied in defense of what I believe are the quintessential American ideals of democratic principle, fair play, and humanitarian caring. Americans who adhere to the principles of Jeffersonian democracy—the dedication to truthfulness as an ideal, the capacity of compromise and peaceful accommodation in government, the resolute stand for freedom against oppression should take a keen academic interest in Bangladesh’s liberation war for there are some parallels to our own struggle for independence.

In recent years, following the declassification of these Dept of State cables and White House memos, it has become apparent that during the worst of the carnage in April 1971, President Nixon advised “all hands, do not squeeze Yahya” while his then Assistant for National Security, Henry Kissinger would go so far as to thank Yahya for his “delicacy and tact.” This was the very same month that the officers of the American Consulate in Dhaka collectively sent a
cable entitled “Dissent from US Policy Toward East Pakistan” which came to be known as the “Blood Telegram”.

Reminiscing in the introduction of his book, my father wrote “these were, indeed, cruel days. While writing the book I often found myself obstructed by the tears in my eyes, when I recalled the faces of Bangladeshi friends who have been martyred in the liberation struggle and tried to comprehend the tremendous suffering of the valiant people of Bangladesh. I also saw again the many members of the American community, especially doctors and missionaries who risked their safety in compassionate service. I will be greatly pleased if some will see this book as a heartfelt statement of admiration for all those who in their own way helped transform a seemingly forlorn dream into a “bright, shiny reality.”

I would like to refer to this “bright shiny reality” that my father alluded to in his book. Granted, Bangladesh since its cruel birth has faced many challenges and trials. It has, in its short existence, had periods of authoritarian rule and retreat from democratic government. Yet I am optimistic that the Bangladesh of today shows much promise and in many ways is even becoming a role model for other developing nations. It is ironic that a country that suffered such a cruel and violent birth has now become a leading contributor of personnel to international peacekeeping missions. In this troubled world, what possible greater honor can there be than to be known as a peace keeper? I am also interested in what might be termed the Bangladeshi model of development, pioneered by Nobel recipient Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank. The notions of “social business” and micro enterprise are premised on the ideal that it is better to teach a person to fish than merely to give him a fish—that it is better to teach a person a lifelong skill than to offer a fleeting gift—and that it is better to give a person or community the responsibility of sustainable accomplishment than to indiscriminately throw money or resources at a problem or challenge. I am impressed also that Bangladesh’s Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been honored for her work in furthering the rights of women, especially in education. Certainly it should be self-evident that an important milestone of development for any nation or community is the empowerment of its women. Social scientists have long known that without this empowerment, development will be elusive.

My feeling is that my fellow Americans and the international community can learn much from Bangladesh, especially its evolving model of poverty reduction which in itself can be a model for conflict resolution. I cannot help but think of Afghanistan—another Asian nation whose customs and traditions I experienced in my youth—that troubled land of seemingly endless conflict and turmoil, which was to be my father’s last posting in the Foreign Service (his credentials were refused by the Soviet dominated government of Babrak Karmal in 1982). If there is ever to be an eventual and sustainable peace in that troubled land, I would venture to say it will ultimately include a judicious and generous
application of some of the salient elements of the Bangladeshi model of development that I mentioned earlier.

In conclusion, I would like to note that in December 2005, I was fortunate enough to revisit Bangladesh as a Department of State Information Policy (IP) speaker and while there, attended the naming ceremony of the Archer K Blood American Center Library. In my many conversations with Bangladeshis from all walks of life, I could not fail to appreciate the intensity of their feelings about the Liberation War of Bangladesh. The legacy of the liberation war even today impacts many aspects of contemporary life in Bangladesh, not the least the current political arena--how a Bangladeshi citizen comported him or herself during the dangerous and bleak nine months of struggle has not, and will not, be forgotten by his or her countrymen.

On my next-to-last day in Dhaka, I was scheduled to speak at the Liberation War Museum and was unexpectedly reminded why I had travelled back to Bangladesh. As I approached the podium, I was quietly informed that the stage had been dedicated to the memory of a neighbor and childhood friend of mine who had perished during the turmoil of the Liberation War. Joi Bangla!

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The legacy of the liberation war even today impacts many aspects of contemporary life in Bangladesh
My wife, Phyllis Taylor, and I feel very fortunate to have been a small part of the freedom struggle that resulted in the independence of Bangladesh. I am very sorry to say that, during the war of independence, our own beloved country, the United States of America, was secretly sending military supplies to Pakistan which were used to kill and oppress citizens of what was then called East Pakistan.

"We knew that the U.S. government was against us, but when we heard what you did, we knew that the American people were on our side."

How well we remember hearing from a Bangladeshi freedom fighter during the war who said, "We knew that the U.S. government was against us, but when we heard what you did, we knew that the American people were on our side."

So, what did we do? Let me explain. In the late 1960’s, I and a friend of mine, Bill Moyer, were fortunate enough to be on the staff of Dr. Martin Luther King’s civil rights organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Bill and I were already committed to active nonviolence as a means of advocating for peace and justice, but our intimate involvement with Dr. King and his movement strengthened and deepened our commitment. After the tragic assassination of Dr. King in 1968, a group of us who admired him very much decided to form an organization in our city of Philadelphia that would train people in his methods of nonviolent action and also engage in such direct action. We decided to call it the “Movement for a New Society (MNS).” People came to us from all over the United States and some other countries to receive training and to be involved in direct action.
Because of our keen interest in struggles for justice and peace, we were horrified in 1971 to learn of the West Pakistani army’s invasion of what was then East Pakistan and all the atrocities they committed. However, we felt helpless to do anything. Then we learned that our own country, the United States, was secretly still sending military aid to the West Pakistani government, even though a dozen other aid-giving countries had cut off such support as a protest against Pakistani army’s massacres. That made us even more horrified. We realized that it was American bombs and bullets that were killing innocent people who wanted nothing more than freedom from oppression. But what could we do to make our government stop its lethal military aid?

Just as we were holding a meeting to discuss this dilemma, we learned from a newspaper report that West Pakistani ships were secretly picking up military cargoes in American ports. We learned furthermore, that one such ship, the Padma, was en route to Baltimore, Maryland (a small city just to the south of Philadelphia) to load US military goods. We began to discuss what to do. Susan Carroll, one of the founders of MNS, said angrily, but not really seriously, “We should mine the harbor! Use explosives! Blow up the ships!”

Bill Moyer countered, “Yes, that’s right, we should mine the harbor; but we should mine it with our own bodies. We should get some small boats--canoes and kayaks--and paddle them in front of the ships. Obviously, a few little boats won’t stop a big, ocean-going freighter. However, we should do it for two reasons: One, the action would be nonviolent and in the spirit of Dr. King. Two, it would have such drama that the newspaper and TV stations would cover it. Right now, our government is keeping our military aid to Pakistan a secret. There are no stories about it in the mass media. This action would get the story into the press and out to the American people. Three, it also would show how much some Americans oppose our government’s policy and how willing they are to risk their lives to oppose it.”

Everyone agreed with Bill’s idea. Soon after our meeting, we learned of a Philadelphia group called “Friends of East Bengal.” The group was made up of Bengalis and Americans who wanted to do everything they could to stop the in “East Pakistan.” We contacted the group and were invited to present our idea to their July 7 meeting. As one of their Bengali members, Sultana Krippendorf, told me later, “At first, we thought you were absolutely crazy. What a wild scheme! Who ever heard of trying to stop freighters with canoes?!! But then, as we listened to your rationale and how you believed the action would use the press to focus public attention on what was really happening and mobilize people to resist US policy, it began to make sense. In the end, we agreed that your group could become the Direct Action Committee of Friends of East Bengal and try out this scheme.”

By combing maritime newspapers and other sources of information, we learned that The Padma was expected in Baltimore on July 11. That gave us only four days to prepare. The Direct Action Committee, which now was made up of Bengalis as well as Americans, met in our living room to prepare. We organized committees to handle such matters as contacting the press, getting canoes and kayaks, making signs and leaflets, finding communication equipment, handling police and legal liaison and recruiting other participants. We reached out to sympathetic groups beyond Philadelphia, such as the Quakers and the Bangladesh Information Center. In a short period of time, we had recruited a very diverse group with a professor of medicine, a social worker, teachers, a Quaker peace activist, a school guidance counselor, four teenage students and others, about 30 people in all.
On the morning of July 11, we drove from Philadelphia to Baltimore with our small boats strapped to the roofs of our cars. Since we had informed newspapers and radio and TV stations about what we were going to do, we began to hear news reports about us on the radio even before arriving in Baltimore. Upon arrival, we went to the harbor pier where The Padma was expected to dock and set up a picket line. The Padma did not arrive on July 11, so we spent the next days keeping up press attention by such means as paddling our boats out into the harbor to “do maneuvers, just like the Navy does before a sea battle.” We explained to reporters that we needed to familiarize ourselves with the tides and currents of the harbor and to decide which “formation” of boats would be most effective to block the big freighter. A doctor from Johns Hopkins University called our small flotilla “the first Navy of Bangladesh.”

During all this time, our American government kept denying that it was sending military aid to West Pakistan. A statement from the US Department of State said: “No arms have been provided to the government of Pakistan since the beginning of this crisis.” We were about to demolish those denials by revealing what really was happening.

In all of our actions-picketing, marching, paddling in the harbor, giving press interviews-we did all we could to maintain a nonviolent attitude in the spirit of Dr. King. For example, we met with Baltimore police officials, explained our purpose, and told them we would be strictly nonviolent. That meant that, not only would we refrain from any verbal or physical violence, but if anyone tried to harm the police, we would put our own bodies in front of the officers to protect them.

When The Padma finally arrived on July 14, we paddled our small “fleet” out into the harbor, determined to get in front of the freighter. We were met with Coast Guard cutters and a large police boat called “The Intrepid.” A policeman on board used a bullhorn to shout to us that we were breaking harbor regulations and would be arrested if we didn’t turn back. He warned us that the ship’s wake would flip over our small boats and the enormous propellers would chop us up into little pieces.

I shouted back, “You have to do what you have to do, but this is a death ship. It is picking up military cargo that will kill thousands of innocent people. We are here to prevent it from docking.”

Soon, we noticed that two of the motorboats in the harbor were not a TV crew that took footage as it sped in for a closer view.

One of the young people with us, who was paddling a canoe with her father, was only 12 years old. She heard workmen on the pier yelling: “Get the hell out of here. That ship won’t stop and you’ll go down like ants from its suction.” She admits that she was frightened, but she was encouraged when she saw the motorboat with the TV crew. “I realized we were making a point; I was afraid no one would know what we had done and nothing would come of our efforts.”

All of us paddled as hard as we could toward The Padma, while the police in the Coast Guard cutters tried to cut us off and keep us back. Sally Willoughby, another young paddler said, “I was scared, but I was really determined to stop that ship. I think I was really willing to die for this.”
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Finally, an order came for the police to arrest us. The cutters pulled alongside us and the police hauled us out of our boats and placed us under arrest. We spent the night in the Baltimore city jail and were sentenced to a year’s probation, but in the morning we were happy to see that the story of the blockade got good TV coverage and was in newspapers and on the radio. A reporter from Reuters told me: “This demonstration is going to hit the papers from here to Singapore.” Years later, a Bangladeshi freedom fighter told me that he had heard the story on BBC.

So, we accomplished what we set out to do. No longer could our government deny that we were sending military equipment to a military dictatorship. More and more people spoke out against US policy. The Beatles held a concert in favor of Bangladesh. Sympathetic members of the US Congress spoke out. Our Direct Action Committee did many other nonviolent direct actions: We blocked other Pakistani ships in other ports. We lobbied Congress. We demonstrated in front of the White House. We helped Bengali sailors jump ship from West Pakistani freighters where they feared for their lives, and much more. When our government finally did cut off military aid to West Pakistan, Phyllis, I and the others were happy to feel that we had played a significant role in turning our own country around and helping a new nation-Bangladesh-be born. And now, here we are, celebrating the 40th anniversary of that new nation’s birth. How grateful I am to God for giving us the courage to put our bodies in the way of the death ships. And how grateful I am to Bangladeshis who supported us and joined with us in the blockade for Bangladesh.

Richard K. Taylor, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is author of the book, BLOCKADE, which describes the successful campaign to change United States’ policy by using small craft to block large freighters carrying military equipment to the government of West Pakistan during their repressive war against Bangladesh. He is married to Phyllis Taylor, a nurse and prison chaplain; they have three children, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not reflect the position of the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC or the Government of Bangladesh.
Diplomacy is about relations between and among nations. In this sense, diplomacy is as old as the human civilization. On the other hand, diplomatic history is about the record of diplomatic interactions between and among nations. But it has to be added that both diplomacy and diplomatic history as concepts and fields of exercise are of modern origin. Diplomacy as a field of state activity may have had a long history; but as an academic discipline, diplomatic history is of post-World War II origin, and so is international relations. Both are intertwined disciplines.

Bangladesh had had its birth under the most adverse circumstances. the Pakistani occupation forces; and, at the same time, it had to cope with the inimical role of the two major international players - USA and China, as well as the Muslim countries. Consequently, at its birth, the new state of Bangladesh faced the challenge of securing quick recognition from the members of the international community and making as many friends as possible within the shortest possible time, both regionally and globally. So alongside the task of rebuilding a war-devastated country the thrust sector for Bangladesh was diplomacy. As it appeared, successful diplomacy was to be a facilitator for domestic reconstruction. In other words, from the beginning Bangladesh has had to stress economic diplomacy - a trend which still continues. In fact, a major part of small state diplomacy is occupied by economic diplomacy. “Reduced to its most fundamental ingredients,” as Cecil V. Crabb writes, “foreign policy [or diplomacy] consists of two elements; national objectives...
to be achieved and means for achieving them. The interaction between national goals and the resources for attaining them is the perennial subject of statecraft. In its ingredients the foreign policy [or diplomacy] of all nations, great and small, is the same.”

The three constants in Bangladesh diplomacy has been: a. consolidation of hard-won independence; b. safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity; and c. securing the much needed international cooperation for national development. In working towards the realisation of these three policy objectives Bangladesh has always been seeking friendship of all countries guided by three principles: a. recognition of sovereign equality of all nations; b. respect for territorial integrity; and c. non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

In 1971, Bangladesh was a new state on the political map of the world; but an old nation with deep historical roots. In an institutional sense, diplomacy of Bangladesh may have had its formal beginning during the Liberation War under its first government (known as the Mujibnagar government); but historically speaking, such a beginning had its roots way back in the closing years of the fourteenth century when the historic undivided Bengal was administered as an independent Sultanate.

In a sense, this was the rebel small kingdom always in awe of the bigger Delhi Muslim sultanate. Both in terms of financial resources and military strength, Bengal was a weaker entity. Ghyasuddin Azam Shah, the independent Sultan of Bengal between 1393 and 1408 did embark on a strategy to safeguard his vulnerable kingdom that presaged what in modern parlance is called small state diplomacy. He established relations with China and Persia - the two big empires - bigger than the Delhi Muslim Sultanate. In a something like a path-breaking move he sent ambassadors to China, and China reciprocated by sending ambassadors to Bengal. Such an exchange of ambassadors continued upto 1440; and this was, in reality, the beginning of the diplomatic history of Bengal.

Ghyasuddin invited the famous Persian poet Hafiz to Bengal - a move that had certainly an image-boosting purpose. Hafiz accepted the invitation; but sudden illness prevented him from undertaking the journey. But he honoured his would-have-been host by composing a ghazal; where in Ghyasuddin figured prominently.

Ghyasuddin was also astute enough to use religious sentiment to strengthen his position vis-a-vis Delhi. He donated fifty thousand gold coins to the holy cities of Makkah and Madina for repairing a drinking water canal and constructing two madrasas.

By resorting to these three moves Ghyasuddin strengthened his image against the Delhi Sultanate; and this is exactly what small state diplomacy is all about. He was thus the pioneer of diplomacy in the history of Bengal, a territory the eastern part of which is now Bangladesh. Thus the present-day state of Bangladesh is a part of this diplomatic heritage. The diplomatic history of the state of Bangladesh had its opening chapter under the Mujibnagar government - the first government of independent Bangladesh.

A retrospective analysis reveals that the diplomatic demarches of the Mujibnagar Government had elements of careful planning and organisation. The areas of concentration appeared to be India, Europe, USA, Socialist countries, Muslim countries of the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia. Moreover, the one supranational
organisation that received priority attention of the Ministry Foreign Affairs was the United Nations.

Immediately after the oath-taking, the Mujibnagar Government initiated its war on the diplomatic front for seeking assistance and recognition. The press-statement issued by the prime minister titled “To the People of the World” closed with these moving words: “In our struggle for survival we seek the friendship of all people, the big power and the small ... We now appeal to the nations of the world for recognition and assistance both material and moral in our struggle for nationhood. Every day this is delayed a thousand lives are lost and more of Bangladesh’s vital assets are destroyed. In the name of humanity act now and earn our undying friendship.” It goes to the credit of this government that the world public opinion, even of those countries the governments of which had inimical stance vis-a-vis Bangladesh, extended moral support to the cause of independent Bangladesh. But the United Nations refused to give the Bangladesh delegation under the leadership of Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury a hearing in the Security Council, an act which drew a cryptic comment from Samar Sen, the Indian Permanent Representative at the United Nations: “Without hearing the voice of Bangladesh is like playing Hamlet without the prince of Denmark.” On 4 December, Justice Chowdhury sent a letter to the president of the Security Council seeking permission to make a statement which produced a resume of the background of the Liberation War. Although refused again this letter was circulated to the members of the Security Council. This letter ended with these poignant words: “There can be no proper evaluation of the present situation, its causes, present state and future solution, without Bangladesh being given a hearing.” The Bangladesh cause was, however, taken care of at the United Nations as the Soviet representative vetoed the ill-intentioned move to

On 15 January 1972, Bangabandhu said, Bangladesh would pursue the policy of “Friendship to all and malice to none.”

The diplomacy of Bangladesh that has been crafted over the years had its initial lead from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Bangabandhu). Because of his pivotal role in the gradual birth of Bangladesh, as well as his overpowering charisma, Bangabandhu played the central role in policymaking for the new state. Some of his initial statements foreshadowed foreign policy and diplomacy of Bangladesh.

On 15 January 1972, Bangabandhu said, Bangladesh would pursue the policy of “Friendship to all and malice to none.” He also declared that we would like to build Bangladesh as “the Switzerland of South Asia.” In his historic speech at the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 1974 remarked:

“Consistent with our own total commitment to peace, we have striven to promote the process of reconciliation in our own subcontinent. It was our firm belief that the emergence of Bangladesh would materially contribute towards creating a structure of peace and stability in our subcontinent and that
the confrontation and strife of the past could be replaced by relations of friendship and cooperation for the welfare of all our peoples. We have not only developed good neighbourly relations with our immediate neighbours India, Burma and Nepal, but have striven to turn away from the past and open a new chapter of relations with Pakistan.”

The position of Bangladesh vis-a-vis the Muslim countries was indicated by Bangabandhu in his home-coming address on 10 January 1972, wherein he emphasised that Bangladesh was the second largest Muslim country, while Pakistan was the fourth. The loud and clear message was that despite being secular, politically, Bangladesh had to be accorded a significant position in the community of Muslim nations because of the sheer size of its Muslim population. While receiving the peace prize at the Asian Peace Conference held in Dhaka on 23rd May 1973, Bangabandhu made clear the position of Bangladesh vis-a-vis the cause of world peace in the following words: We do not believe in the arms race. We seek the friendship of all nations in order to promote the welfare of the oppressed and exploited people everywhere... we are... following a positive, non-aligned foreign policy by keeping ourselves aloof from the military power blocs. Promotion of international peace and solidarity is not merely the policy of the government; it has been enshrined in our constitution as one of the fundamental principles of state policy.

Up to August 1975, the personal image of Bangabandhu acted as the single most important catalyst in ensuring the desired spin-offs for Bangladesh foreign policy. The major goals and directions thus set in those formative years have remained basically unchanged in the subsequent turbulent years.

The greatest achievement of Bangladesh foreign policy over the years, has been to endow a volatile region like South Asia with the first ever framework for regionalism. The cooperative regime that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) subsequently translated into a reality was indeed foreseen by Bangabandhu, while speaking at a public reception in Kolkata on 6 February 1972. He exhorted the leaders of South Asia in the following words:

...Let us bring to an end once and for all the sterile policy of confrontation between neighbours. Let us not fritter away our national resources but use them to lift the standard of living of our people. We should not be wanting with all concerned for creating an era of peace in South Asia, where we could live side by side as good neighbours and pursue constructive policies for the benefit of our people.

The realisation of such a vision began in 1980 with Ziaur Rahman, and completed in 1985 with the launching of SAARC in Dhaka when H.M. Ershad was at the helm of affairs. By 1974, as many as 131 countries had recognised Bangladesh. By August 1975, China, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran were the countries which had not recognised Bangladesh. But the background for facilitating recognition had been prepared during the pre-1975 period.

On 23 February 1974, Bangladesh became a member of the organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). This membership indicated Bangladesh’s normalisation of relations with the Muslim ummah. On 17 September 1974, Bangladesh was admitted as the 134th member of the United Nations. With the UN membership Bangladesh became a fully-fledged member of the international community.

The diplomatic history of Bangladesh following the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu on 15 August 1975 showed signs of continuity in general, and change in certain specificities. There have been mileages achieved over the years in certain areas. But, in retrospect, it appears that alongside laying
of the foundation most of the architecture of Bangladesh diplomacy was built during the period preceding 15 August 1975; and ever since there have been renovations and minor changes.

In the recent past, especially after re-democratisation of Bangladesh in the 1990s additions in the diplomatic architecture include the Indo-Bangladesh Ganges Water Treaty (12 Dec 1996), and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord (2 Dec 1997). During the same period Bangladesh emerged as the highest contributor of troops to the UN peacekeeping missions-an achievement that has boosted the image of the country as an active member of the international community.

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The war of liberation of Bangladesh was fought in various fronts. In addition to the military front, diplomatic front was critical to advance our goal to free the country from Pakistani occupation forces. Ironically, our historians apparently failed to do justice in putting their sacrifices in their research works. Neither their role to obtain recognition of foreign Governments in the post-independence era has been chronicled in the history. Many of us are not perhaps aware that even before the Bangladesh Provisional Government was formed on 10 April, 1971, two diplomats from the then Pakistan mission in New Delhi (K.M. Shehabuddin, Second Secretary & Amjadul Huq, Assistant Press Attaché’) resigned from their lucrative posts in favor of Bangladesh when the chance of a liberated Bangladesh was a remote possibility. With their defection, the diplomatic front of the liberation war of Bangladesh was in fact opened on 6 April 1971.

Soon after their resignation, Mr. M. Hossain Ali, the then Deputy High Commissioner at the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata along with 65 Bengali colleagues stunned the whole world by hoisting flag of independent Bangladesh on 18 April, 1971, and declaring allegiance to the country. Other diplomats who defected at the Kolkata Mission were, among others, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Third Secretary, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Third Secretary, other officials including Mr. Anwar Husain Choudhury, Kazi Sekander Ali and Mr.
On 18 April 1971 mid-day (Sunday), Mr. M. Hossain Ali, the then Pakistan Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata along with his 65 Bengalee colleagues, went to the roof of the Deputy High Commission building located at 9 Circus Avenue (presently Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Sarani). At around 1245 hrs, amid applause of thousands of people who assembled at the Mission and in its vicinity, Mr. Ali lowered the Pakistani flag and hoisted the national flag of Bangladesh on the roof top. This was the first time that Bangladesh national flag was hoisted on foreign soil. Subsequently, Mr. Ali, Mission officials and the jubilant crowd saluted the flag. A new plaque displaying “Bangladesh Diplomatic Mission” was put up on the wall of the main entrance removing the name-plaque of “Pakistan Deputy High Commission”. Immediately afterwards, Mr. M. Hossain Ali formally declared his full allegiance to the newly formed Provisional Government severing all ties with Islamabad. Thus the Pakistan Deputy High Commission in Kolkata became the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission. It is not unusual that fifty five West Pakistani officials at the Deputy High Commission did not turn up to work next day on hearing the news of flag hoisting on 18 April, 1971.

Following the hoisting of the Bangladesh flag and taking virtual control of the Kolkata Mission, Pakistani government dispatched Mr. Mehdi Masood, Pakistani Deputy High Commissioner in New Delhi as the replacement of Mr. Hussain Ali. Pakistan demanded the immediate possession of the Chancery building to the government of India “as it was a Consulate of the main Pakistani mission in New Delhi accredited to the government of India”. India had a big role in countering the Pakistani offensive that “Pakistani diplomat” M. Hossain Ali and his east Pakistani colleagues had been taken hostage by India and were acting under duress.

The flag hoisting incident instantly emboldened fellow Bengali diplomats serving in various Pakistan Missions to switch their loyalty to the Bangladesh Provisional Government who were already dreaming of an independent Bangladesh. Bengalee diplomats in New York, Washington DC, London, Paris, Berne, Baghdad, Hong Kong, Stock Holm, Lagos, Manila, Brussels, Madrid, Beirut, Katmandu, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, and Cairo followed the suit. Notable among them were Mr. A.H. Mahmood Ali, Mr. S.A. Karim, Mr. Enayet Karim, Mr. SAMS Kibria, Mr. M.A. Muhith, Syed Muazzem Ali, Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, Mr. Akbar Lutful Matin, Mr. Reazul Karim, Mr. Waliur Rahman, Mr. Abdul Fateh, Mr. M.U.A. Jaigirdar, Mr. K.K. Panni, Mr. QAMA Rahim and Mr. Mustafizur Rahman, among others.

Significance of the flag hoisting at Kolkata Mission on 18 April, 1971:

The hoisting of the flag of independent Bangladesh at the Kolkata mission on 18 April 1971 was a significant event in our national history. The historic event following the Proclamation of Independence on 10 April and the swearing-in of the Provisional Government of Bangladesh at Mujibnagar on 17 April 1971, virtually established the first diplomatic mission of Bangladesh. At the international level, this heroic move drew heightened attention in the global media and eventually contributed to help shape world opinion in favour of our epic struggle. This was a significant point of development in our national history because the erstwhile Pakistan Deputy High Commission with its new proud name of “Mission of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to India” became the centre of attraction. This literally opened a new window to the world for projecting the struggle for our independence and also
reinforced the legitimacy of the Provisional Government.

It is learnt that more than one hundred diplomatic and other officials formally declared allegiance to Bangladesh during the war of liberation on different dates which not only galvanized our liberation struggle but also greatly helped to draw attention and sympathy about our cause among foreign leaders. Belated though, an effort should be made to ensure that everyone is appropriately recognized and honored. When we celebrate forty years of our great independence, we should know that these diplomats and officials who rang the bell announcing their loyalty to Bangladesh, braving all odds and uncertainties in foreign lands, were some of the pioneers who diplomatically engaged our country with the rest of the world.

Source: 1) There and Back Again- A Diplomat’s Tale by Ambassador KM Shehabuddin 2) Articles of and conversation with Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, former Secretary to the Government 3) Materials from Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Kolkata, India 4) Various clippings from papers/magazines.

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The Asia Society recently released a report in Dhaka on Enhancing Investment Relations between the United States and Bangladesh, which is intended to assist the Bangladesh government in its efforts to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s Vision 2021 targets, which seek to make Bangladesh a middle-income country.

The report was guided by a 13-member Advisory Committee composed of representatives from Bangladesh’s government, private sector, and nongovernmental organizations, along with U.S. and other private-sector, nonprofit, and academic professionals, all of whom have extensive experience working with Bangladesh and other emerging-market countries. The Advisory Committee members were aware of the country’s substantial achievements in recent years, as well as the significant economic and social challenges that currently face the Bangladesh government. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee representatives unanimously believe that there is now a window of opportunity for Bangladesh to make major economic progress through the rapid growth of trade, investment, and employment.

Vision 2021 Targets

Vision 2021, a road map intended to help transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021, was announced in January 2009.
by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh to commemorate the country’s fiftieth anniversary of independence. Vision 2021 entails becoming a participatory democracy, achieving transparency and accountability in Bangladesh’s system of governance, reducing poverty, and expanding growth and the equitable distribution of income. Bangladesh deserves the strong support of friends around the world to bring this bold vision into reality. In order to play a small role in facilitating this process, the Asia Society’s Bangladesh Trade and Investment Report seeks to: highlight the achievements of Bangladesh over the last four decades; detail some of the country’s trade and investment impediments; describe growth opportunities in a number of economic sectors; and suggest steps that can be taken to help Bangladesh achieve its Vision 2021 goals. The report was launched at the American Chamber of Commerce in Dhaka, Bangladesh on December 8, 2010 and the following is a summary of the same. (The full report is available on the Asia Society website, http://asiasociety.org/)

Required GDP Growth

The targets and milestones outlined in Sheikh Hasina’s announced Vision 2021 are possible to achieve, but Bangladesh must overcome a host of challenges. In particular, achieving these goals will require a major increase in Bangladesh’s GDP growth rate, from 6% in 2010 to 8% by 2013 and to 10% by 2017. These growth rates have only been constantly achieved by China and India in recent years.
Nevertheless, Bangladesh’s GDP has been growing steadily by an average of 6% over the last 10 years. As a result, GDP almost tripled from US$34 billion in 1994 to approximately US$90 billion in 2010 and the Bangladesh economy now ranks forty-ninth globally in terms of GDP. Although Bangladesh has achieved this impressive growth rate in recent years, increasing growth to 8% and 10% will not be easy, and will require large amounts of investment capital. It is clear that in order to achieve these ambitious growth targets, Bangladesh will need to significantly increase the amount of both domestic investment and external funds received from overseas workers, manufactured exports, and foreign investment. It is estimated that the target GDP growth rates will require total investment in Bangladesh—as a percentage of GDP—to increase from 27% in 2010 to 30% in 2013 and to 32% in 2017.

To achieve these targets, it is estimated that the country needs to increase domestic investment from approximately 24% to 28%, and foreign direct investment from less than 1% to around 4%. This is equivalent to raising investment from less than US$1 billion a year to roughly US$8 billion annually over the 11-year period from 2010 to 2021.

Increasing foreign direct investment by US$7 billion will take a massive effort that will require the Bangladesh government to focus on increasing foreign investment.

**Need for increase in Exports and Foreign Direct Investment**

Bangladesh has significantly increased its level of international trade over the past 10 years by expanding manufacturing activities in the textile and garment sectors. Bangladesh has become a much more attractive trading partner over the past five years, a development that is attributable almost entirely to its export manufacturing activities in the readymade garment sector. Despite a huge increase in exports, foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bangladesh has been among the lowest of all Asian countries, and foreign portfolio investment (FPI) in the country’s stock market barely exists. Trade

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has experienced more than a twofold jump in exports, which rose from US$6.5 billion in 2001 to US$16.2 billion in 2010. However, despite this major increase, Bangladesh’s imports have grown at a faster rate, and the value of imports has consistently exceeded the value of exports. Imports to Bangladesh have increased significantly, from US$9.3 billion in 2001 to US$23.7 billion in 2010. In the past five years, the country’s import costs have doubled.

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Thus Bangladesh’s trade deficit over the last 10 years widened significantly, from US$2.8 billion in 2001 to US$7.5 billion in 2010. The country’s large increase in exports, although impressive, masks a number of serious concerns:

- The current export structure relies almost exclusively on the readymade garment sector; despite efforts to diversify exports, this structure remains one dimensional.
- The country’s export revenue lags all of its Asian neighbors.
- Bangladesh’s share of total world exports is still insignificant (0.10%)

To add to this, the country’s current export structure remains extremely one dimensional, and almost no progress has been made toward developing other export-oriented, labor-intensive industries in Bangladesh. Garments and apparel represent the overwhelming majority of exports, and the industry creates the largest proportion of job opportunities. Readymade garments generated the highest revenue-US$12.3 billion in 2009. However, Bangladeshi-branded apparel has earned a reputation for being “cut and paste” garments, and the international textile community perceives Bangladeshi garment manufacturers as lacking the ambition to move up the value chain.

The government established an Export Promotion Bureau under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce to promote exports and to improve policies to help private-sector exporters and the Bureau has received positive reviews from the private sector for providing assistance. The government also established a number of new Export Processing Zones (EPZs) under the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority, which manages eight EPZs in Dhaka, Uttara, Adamjee, Chittagong, Comilla, Ishwardi, Karnaphuli, and Mongla. These EPZs have been successful, accounting for 12.2% of the country’s total exports in fiscal year 2009.
Foreign Direct Investment

Despite a substantial increase in trade activities, FDI flows into Bangladesh have been consistently low over the past decade. Moreover, more than 40% of annual FDI flows came through reinvested earnings and intra-company loans from foreign companies already operating in Bangladesh rather than equity from new foreign investors.

FDI Inflows by Components

(US$ million)

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<tr>
<td>Equity Capital</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>2,869</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinvested Earnings</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>1,643</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intra-Company Loans</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>4,985</td>
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Source: Bangladesh Bank, FDI Survey Report, June 2010

The four sectors receiving the largest amounts of FDI are gas and petroleum, telecommunications, textiles and wearing, and banking. A wide range of investment opportunities are available in Bangladesh, but investment will not happen unless the government plays a more active role in attracting, developing, facilitating and nurturing relationships with foreign investors.

This is particularly true for Public Private Partnership investment in much needed infrastructure development including: gas and coal, power plants, highways, ports, railways, waterways, roadways, airports and telecommunications.

**Power and energy constraints faced by investors**

Over the past few years, Bangladesh has suffered from a national power crisis as a result of the government’s failure to develop Bangladeshi natural gas and coal resources in recent years and to establish an efficient gas pipeline distribution network—all of which are essential for supplying energy to the country’s power sector. As of April 2010, demand for electricity in Bangladesh was estimated at 5,500-6,000 megawatts (MW) per day. However, the country currently generates only 3,800 MW, thereby creating a shortage of approximately 1,700 MW3. This situation is expected to become more difficult, as it is estimated...
that demand for electricity will grow at an annual rate of about 8% over the next 10 years. Currently, 87% of the country’s power plants use domestic natural gas, and almost all plants operate at less than capacity because of a shortage of gas. An inadequate gas distribution system and leakage of electricity in the form of illegal connections and meter tampering only exacerbates the country’s power shortage problem. Since natural gas remains the only significant source of commercial energy in Bangladesh and thus, significant onshore and offshore investments are also required in the energy sector in terms of both production and exploration.

The government has been tackling the power problem in both the short term and the medium term. During the past six months, the government has scheduled daily power cuts, restricted the use of air-conditioning during the peak hours of 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., and even shut down five fertilizer factories in order to divert gas to power plants. In recent months, the government also has approved the establishment and operation of eight oil-fueled rental power plants, which will increase the country’s power supply by 530 MW 4. At least 10 more plants are expected to be approved before the end of this year, increasing the country’s power supply by a total of 1,360 MW. Although these plants will help alleviate the problem in the short term, they are costly and do not address the country’s long-term problem. Therefore, the government is also expediting the approval of a number of large power plants that will be supplied by dedicated gas pipelines; however, these will not come on stream for a few years.

The Asia Society report provides the following recommendations to enable Bangladesh to improve its trade and investment opportunities over the next ten years, and thus attract much needed foreign capital and stay on path to achieve Vision 2021 goals:

I. Need for a government trade and investment agenda - In order to maximize the country’s trade and investment opportunities over the next ten years, the Bangladesh Government will need to establish a clearly defined and comprehensive trade investment agenda as it has successfully done in other sectors, such as health, education, and energy.

The government’s new trade and investment agenda should include:

- a comprehensive government policy, overseen by a senior advisor who reports to the prime minister;
- a coordinated ministry and agency board for trade and investment;
- a focused trade and investment organization;
- a Public-Private Business Council to promote dialogue between government officials and private-sector representatives; and
- an international communications program.


II. Comprehensive government policy - The first component of the government’s trade and investment agenda should be to outline a comprehensive trade and investment policy framework that would
encompass all of Bangladesh’s trade and investment activities, including: the Ministries of Commerce and Industry, the Export Promotion Board, Board of Investment, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority, Special Economic Zones, Public-Private Partnership, and Privatization Commission. (All of these trade and investment activities should be overseen by an appointed senior advisor for trade and investment, who would report directly to the Prime Minister. The advisor in charge of trade and investment should be a new member of the Prime Minister’s team of senior advisors and would help define specific targets and development objectives to be achieved by the agencies within its purview.)

III. Ministry and agency coordinating body - To ensure better coordination among the ministries and agencies involved in trade and investment in Bangladesh, a Trade and Investment Coordinating Board should be set up that includes the relevant ministers and agency heads including the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industry, Board of Investment, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority, Special Economic Zones, Export Promotion Board, Public-Private Partnership, Privatization Commission, and the head of the Bangladesh Trade and Investment Center (BTIC). The board should be chaired by the senior advisor for trade and investment and should meet monthly to discuss a range of issues, particularly to agree on a clear set of quantitative targets to be achieved in terms of trade volumes and new investments in order to expand economic growth in Bangladesh. Once these annual targets are established then the Trade and Investment Coordinating Board would review monthly/quarterly up-to-date export and investment achievements, and propose measures that could be taken to improve those results.

IV. Bangladesh trade and investment center - A key element of the government’s trade and investment agenda would be the establishment of the Bangladesh Trade and Investment Center (BTIC), which would be the primary interface and conduit for domestic and foreign exporters and foreign investors seeking to work with any of the trade and investment agencies. The BTIC would be a “one-stop shop” storefront that could be managed by a small number of donor-funded specialists, and staff seconded from relevant government agencies.

V. Public-private dialogue - The Bangladesh private sector is very dynamic and has been a major driver of exports and economic growth over the past ten years. However, it needs to work in concert with the government to help the country achieve its Vision 2021 goals. Under the government’s trade and investment agenda, a new public-private dialogue should be established as another step to improve government relations with businessmen in Bangladesh. Such public-private dialogue councils and partnerships have been established in more than 30 emerging market countries, and in most cases have proved very effective. In Bangladesh, this forum would be particularly useful for the government’s recently announced public-private partnership for joint infrastructure development, as well as the newly passed legislation on establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZ).

VI. International communications strategy - Bangladesh continues to suffer from a poor image overseas, which is not always deserved. As part of the government’s trade and investment agenda, this foreign perception must be changed, particularly by reaching out to the country’s natural constituencies in Asia, Europe, and North America, where most of its trading partners, foreign investors, financial institution partners, potential foreign institutional investors, as well as influential media outlets are located.

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Introduction:

Since prehistoric era, the spirit of free enterprise and innovative entrepreneurship was always present in the economic life of this country which has always encouraged external trade and investment engagement.

Being a plural, open, globally oriented society, Bangladesh always welcomed foreign entrepreneurs in its economy. Bangladesh is being considered as the most liberal and business-friendly economy in this region as such has become an attractive destination for business and investment. Its investment climate offers generous and attractive packages of incentives to investors. There is no discrimination between the local and foreign investors. Prevailing laws and practices fully guarantee the safety of the investment and their returns. Bangladesh has a larger supply of relatively industrious low-cost labor, with flexibility to match in job demands including professionals, technologists and middle and low-level skilled personnel.

Despite the financial markets crashed there is a tremendous opportunity for the growth of private equity and other new forms of capital funding for private enterprise. The fiscal, commercial, monetary and other sectoral policies of the government are supportive of private sector growth on scales not known before. Bangladesh offers a strong local market, easier global market access and proven export competitiveness. Its middle class consumers are larger in numbers than the total population.
of Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Considering a Private sector led growth economy, Bangladesh is keen to ensure a sustained conducive business climate. Undertaking pragmatic reforms and enhancing the facilitative role of the regulatory agencies and institutions are the prime agenda of government. The present government attaches high priority to private investment, both domestic and foreign, and is committed to making substantial improvement in the existing investment climate.

The present government of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to strengthening BOI services and encourages investors for safe and win-win investments to achieve the Vision 2021.

**Vision 2021 and the Economic development vision:**

We envision ‘a middle income country where poverty will be drastically reduced; where the citizens will be able to meet every basic need and where development will be on fast track, with ever-increasing rates of growth”

**The Medium Term Economic Targets are (2013) set as under:**

- Raising economic growth rate to 8%
- Reducing poverty rate to 25%
- Reducing absolute poverty rate to 15% from 45% by 2021
- Enhancing electricity supply to 7,000 MW

**The Long Term Economic Targets are (2021) set as under:**

- Boosting economic growth rate to 10% in 2017 & sustaining it till 2021
- Reducing poverty rate to 15%
- Enhancing electricity supply to 20,000 MW
- Raising the economy to the level of a middle-income country by 2021
- GDP per capita at $1500

The present government of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to strengthening BOI services and encourages investors for safe and win-win investments to achieve the Vision 2021.
Country Credit rating:

Moody’s Investors’ service has rated Bangladesh BA3, which implies sound macroeconomic fundamentals and better credit worthiness. This ranking is similar to that of BB- assigned by Standard and Poor’s recently. In South Asia, which is amongst the least economically integrated regions of the world, Bangladesh ranks number 2, just after India. This rating broadly incorporates financial and balance of payments robustness, continued economic stability and sustained growth at around 6 per cent per annum over the last one decade. Stable prices, exchange rates, high foreign currency reserves and growing home remittances from overseas Bengali workers contribute a lot to this perception. Policy consistency along with steady progress in trade openness has helped steady economic growth averaging over 6% per annum.

Salient features of Industrial policy 2010

The latest promulgated Industrial Policy-2010 offers the following features to the prospective investors:

- Private Initiative is the main driving force of economic development and the government will create favorable atmosphere to augment private investment in the country’s industrialization.
- Prioritization of agro-based and labor intensive industrialization.
- Ensure facilities and infrastructural support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Giving Priority to Electricity, Gas; Port Facilities, Roads, Railway Communication and Telecommunication
- Full utilization of gas and coal will be ensured to generate power. At the same time, natural resources, solar power and municipal refuse will be used to produce electricity and biogas.
- Ensure the availability of equity, fund and loans to the industrial entrepreneurs to establish or administer industrial projects.
- Take steps for simplification of procedures, introducing IT enabled services to one stop centers of Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, Board of Investment and in other offices
- Provide all necessary assistance and support including land and capital to the women entrepreneurs to establish industries in various sectors.
- Take necessary reform measures for ensuring Intellectual Property Right in areas of technological development and innovation in industrial sectors.
- Ensuring support for production of environment friendly products and the government will ensure whether all the compliances regarding health and friendly environment are followed according to the WTO Rules and Procedures.

Investment Climate Why Bangladesh?

Bangladesh is a winning combination with its competitive business-friendly environment and cost structure that can give you best returns:

- Industrious low-cost workforce
- Strategic location, regional connectivity and worldwide

Moody’s Investors’ service has rated Bangladesh BA3, which implies sound macroeconomic fundamentals and better credit worthiness. In South Asia, which is amongst the least economically integrated regions of the world, Bangladesh ranks number 2, just after India.
access.

- Strong local market and growth
- Low cost of energy
- Proven export competitiveness
- Competitive incentives
- Export and Economic Zones
- Positive investment climate

Bangladesh offers the most liberal investment climate in South Asia. The Foreign Private Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act, 1980, which deals with promotion and protection of investment in Bangladesh ensures equal treatment for local and foreign investors and legal protection to foreign investment in Bangladesh against nationalization and expropriation. It also guarantees repatriation of capital and dividend. Adequate protection is available for intellectual property rights, such as patents, designs, trademarks and copyrights. Bangladesh is a signatory to Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) of the World Bank Group, Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) of USA, International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and also a member of World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and World Trade Organization (WTO).

According to a recent comparative study conducted by the Board of Investment and JETRO on Cost of Doing Business between the competing locations, Bangladesh is one of the most competitive locations, in many indicators, among the ASEAN, Far Eastern and South Asian countries. There are lucrative incentives for foreign investors such as 100% ownership, tax and duty exemptions.

Citi Investment Research & Analysis of Citigroup in its Global Economics View captioned as “Global Growth Generators: Moving beyond ‘Emerging Markets’ and ‘BRIC” Published in February, 2011 termed Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam have the most promising (per capita) growth prospects - they are our 3G countries which means the countries that over the next 5, 10, 20 and 40 years are expected to deliver high growth and profitable investment opportunities. The most promising countries are composed of the
Facilities and incentives for foreign investors:

- Tax exemption on royalties, technical knowhow and technical assistance fees and facilities for their repatriation
- Tax exemption on interests on foreign loans
- Tax exemptions on capital gains from transfer of shares by the investing company
- Exemption of income tax for up to three years for the expatriate personnel employed under an approved industrial set up
- Remittances of up to 50% of salaries of the foreigners employed in Bangladesh and facilities for repatriation of their savings and retirement benefits at the time of their return
- No restrictions on issuance of work permits to project related foreign nationals and employees
- Facilities for repatriation of invested capital, profits and dividends
- Provision of transfer of shares held by foreign share holders to local investors
- Taka the Bangladesh currency would be convertible for international payments for the foreign investors
- Reinvestment of remittable dividends would be treated as new investment
- Level playing field: foreign owned companies duly registered in Bangladesh will be on the same footing as locally owned ones
- Foreign investment in Bangladesh is secure and highly profitable
- According to available records no foreign investors have ever lost money in Bangladesh.

The Package of incentives is listed below:

Fiscal incentives for industries:

- Corporate tax holiday of 5 to 7 years for selected sectors
- Reduced tariff on import of raw materials capital machinery
- Bonded warehousing
- Accelerated depreciation on cost of machinery is admissible for new industrial undertaking (50% in the first year of commercial production, 30% in the second year, and 20% in the third year)
- Tax exemption on capital gains from the transfer of shares of public limited companies listed with a stock exchange
**Additional facilities/incentives:**

- 100% foreign equity allowed
- Unrestricted exit policy
- Remittance of royalty, technical know-how and technical assistance fees
- Full repatriation facilities of dividends and capital at exit
- Citizenship by investing a minimum of US$ 5,00,000
- Permanent resident permits on investing US$ 75,000
- An investor can wind up investment either through a decision of the AGM or EGM. He or she can repatriate the sales proceeds after securing proper authorization from the Central Bank

**Special incentives for the power sector:**

Incentives for Private Sector Power Generation Policy of Bangladesh (revised in Nov 2004) provides a number of fiscal incentives for foreign investment in the Power sector. Some of them are depicted below:

The private power companies shall be exempted from corporate income tax for a period of 15 years.

The companies will be allowed to import plant and equipment within a period of twelve (12) years of Commercial Operation without payment of customs duties, VAT (Value Added Tax) and any surcharges.

- Repatriation of equity along with dividends will be allowed freely.
- Exemption from income tax in Bangladesh for Repatriation of equity along with dividends will be allowed freely.
- Exemption from income tax in Bangladesh for foreign lenders to such companies.
- Tax exemption on royalties, technical know-how and technical assistance fees and facilities for their repatriation.
• Tax exemption on interest on foreign loans.
• Avoidance of double taxation in case of foreign investors on the basis of bilateral agreements.
• Remittance of up to 50% of salary of the foreigners employed in Bangladesh and facilities for repatriation of their savings and retirement benefits at the time of their return.
• No restrictions on issuance of work permits to project related foreign nationals and employees.
• Provision of transfer of shares held by foreign shareholders to local shareholders/ investors.
• Re-investment of remittable dividend to be treated as new foreign investment.
• Facilities for repatriation of invested capital, profits and dividends.
• Companies are eligible for all other concessions which are available to industrial projects.
Investment plays an important role in the socio-economic development of a country. The contribution of foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is very significant especially in the underdeveloped and developing countries. Private sector provides bulk of employment and contributes to poverty alleviation.

The Bangladesh Government is committed to the nation to boost up industrialization, export & employment generation and to eliminate poverty to achieve rapid economic emancipation of the people of Bangladesh. In view of the growing need of attracting FDI, Local Investment and industrialization, the Government took initiative to set up Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in the different parts of the country. Accordingly the BANGLADESH EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES AUTHORITY ACT was passed in the Parliament. In pursuance of the Act, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) has been empowered for creation, development, operation and management of Export Processing Zones. From the inception, BEPZA is engaged in attracting and facilitating foreign and local investment in the Export Processing Zones of the country. Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) is working directly under the leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister of the country.

The first EPZ of the country was set up in Chittagong in 1983. The Chittagong EPZ is the pioneer for investors which gradually turned Bangladesh as a “New Horizon for investment”. Observing its astounding success, Dhaka EPZ came into operation in the year 1993. Afterwards 6(six) new EPZs namely Mongla, Comilla, Ishwardi, Uttara (Nilphamari), Adamjee & Karnaphuli have been set up and these EPZs have already started operation.

**MODE OF INVESTMENT**

BEPZA pursues an open door policy in regards to foreign or local investment in its EPZs. It attracts investment in three categories, i.e.:
- Type A- Investment with 100% foreign ownership,
- Type-B- Joint venture between Bangladeshi and foreign investors with no limit to the extent of equity share,
- Type-C- 100% Bangladeshi ownership.

**STRENGTHS OF BEPZA**

**1) Geo-regional location:**

The comparative advantages of the EPZ in Bangladesh are their homogenously, large number of potential human resources, competitive wage level, and its ‘geo-regional location’. Bangladesh is situated in close proximity to the Bay of Bengal, which has given the country with an easy access to the world through sea-way and also by air in terms of import and export. As a result, the foreign investors are always keen to take those strategic advantages.

**2) Workforce:**

The main attraction of investment in Bangladesh is the most inexpensive, productive, abundant and easily trainable workforce. Today Bangladesh has a growing number of managers, engineers, technicians and skilled labour force. The minimum wage of the workers in the EPZs is the lowest in Asia. Changing economic and political conditions in the Asian region are prompting many international investors to reassess their investment strategies and plan for relocating their investments in Bangladesh. Those changes are producing higher opportunities for Bangladesh to attract higher levels of FDI. China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Philippines and even Vietnam, Indonesia & Malaysia are experiencing wages increase and rising production costs that are making them less attractive as low cost production base resulting the EPZs of Bangladesh to become a new field and place for foreign investment.

**3) One Window Service:**

BEPZA has been providing “ONE WINDOW SERVICE” to its investors. Operational and documentation procedures have been framed to make them easy and simple with minimum formalities. Investors need only to deal with BEPZA for all of their investment and operational requirements. BEPZA assist the investors with everything like import, export, and subcontract permits etc. Apart from that, by providing on-site services such as customs clearance, logistics, international countries, and offshore banking facilities,
BEPZA provides its investors with the chance to further simplify business processes, resulting in a reduction in lead time. BEPZA also provides same-day services to the investors.

(4) Protection of Foreign investment:

Foreign investors are afforded multiple levels of protection in BEPZA. The Foreign Private Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act secures all foreign investment in Bangladesh. As a member of OPIC’s (Overseas Private Investment Corporation, USA) insurance and finance programmes are operable in Bangladesh as well as in the EPZs. Bangladesh is a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) which provides safeguards and security under international law. The International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Dispute (ICSID) also provides an additional means of remedy, whilst copyright interests are protected through World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

(5) Flexibility:

BEPZA offers investment opportunities in convertible foreign currencies, providing investors with the flexibility of repatriating of both profit and capital.

BEPZA provides infrastructure facilities for the investors. BEPZA provides fully serviced plots and standard factory buildings for setting up manufacturing industry. Investor can use these plots under a 30 years lease which is renewable. Apart from these plots, an investor may also take lease of Standard Factory Building (SFB) owned by BEPZA. All the utility connections such as electricity, water, internet & telecommunication are readily connected in the enterprises of the EPZs. BEPZA has also allowed setting up hi-tech infrastructure facilities like Central Effluent Treatment Plant, Water Treatment Plant, Inland Container Deport (ICD), Internet service provider, Power Generation Plant as service oriented industries in the EPZs.

(7) Support Facilities:

BEPZA has allowed setting up of support service business facilities for the investors such as local and foreign banks, Off Shore Banking Units (OBU) insurance companies, C & F agent, freight forwarder and courier service in the EPZs. Other administrative facilities, such as Customs Office, Police Station, BEPZA’s Security, Fire Station, Public Transport, Medical centers etc are available in the EPZs.
- Duty free export of finished goods.
- Relief from double taxation.
- Exemption from dividend tax for tax holiday period.
- Duty free import of two/three duty free vehicles for A & B type industries to certain conditions (for the projects approved before March 22, 2009).
- Full repatriation of profit, capital & establishment.

(9) Automation:
To become the active partner of “Digital Bangladesh”, BEPZA has streamlined its activities by reducing dependency on paper documentation. BEPZA is now working with IFC to automate three priority processes: the acceptance, screening and approval of applications for import permits, export permits, and sub-contract permits. The objectives of the project are a 30% reduction of the processing time for the three permits; the elimination of physical paper between the user and the processor; and the facilitation of statistical data collection and information with regard to these three processes. Ultimately the automation will ensure timely services to the existing and potential investors. In October 2009, Chittagong EPZ was automated, and Dhaka EPZ in June 2010. To ensure overall automation, BEPZA has set up Video Conferencing among the Zones, LAN and WAN connectivity, and also a dynamic website.

(10) Capacity Building:
Capacity building is an ongoing process and essential instrument for promotion of an organization. BEPZA has started administrative streamlining by broadening its organogram and scope of activities. It has taken up lot of reforms in labor, security and environment management, online development, promotional campaign, specialized training, familiarization tour through financial assistance from World Bank, DFID and IFC-BICF. Necessary steps have been taken to enhance EPZ workers rights, workers’ wages, remuneration, facilities. BEPZA deployed 60(sixty) counselors to monitor workers welfare and address the workers issues and also working as a bridge between the workers and the management of the company to uphold healthy and harmonious relation.

(11) Industrial Units:
Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority has sanctioned 646 industrial units in different EPZs of the country as of December 2010. Among these, 349 industries are already in operation as of November 2010 and others in their different stages of implementation. These industries produce
different types of products, such as garments, textile, footwear and leather, electronics, knitwear, caps, tent, garment accessories, metal products, agro products, power industry, miscellaneous, etc. Some world famous brand products such as Nike, Reebok, Lafuma, Sony Ericsson, Nissan, Mitsubishi, Hino, Toyota, Konika, Fuji, Gap, Brouks, J.C. Penny, Wal-Mart, Kmart, Ospig (Germany), Mother Care (UK), Adidas, Falcon (USA), etc are being manufactured in the EPZs.

(12) Employment:

Up to December 2010 employment opportunity for 2,77,612 Bangladesh nationals has been created of which 64% is female. Thus, BEPZA is playing pivotal role in poverty alleviation through employment generation as well as women empowerment. Apart from these, about 4,00,000 employment opportunities have been created indirectly for these EPZs.

Flow Chart: Employment (Cumulative growth)

Pie Chart: Ratio of male and female workers

Up to December 2010 employment opportunity for 2,77,612 Bangladesh nationals has been created of which 64% is female.
Investment

**Up to December, 2010, the total** amount of actual investment in BEPZA stands at US$ 1906.07 million. 33 countries including S. Korea, Japan, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, U.S.A, U.K, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, British Virgin Island, India, Sweden, Singapore, Pakistan, Panama, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Australia, Nepal, Mauritius, Ireland, U.A.E, Turkey, Ukraine, Marshal Island have already invested in the EPZs of Bangladesh.

![Flow Chart: Investment (Cumulative growth)](image)

Export

Up to December, 2010, products worth of US$ 23,346.94 million were exported from the EPZs of Bangladesh. In the financial year 2009-2010, total export from the EPZs was US Dollar 2,822 million, which is equivalent to about 17.36% of the country’s total national export. The government also earns a sizeable amount of foreign exchange through the operation of EPZs in the country.

Conclusion

BEPZA has successfully traversed a long way of 27 years to increase the volume of investment, diversification of export and thereby, employment generation and thus contributed to strengthen the economic base of the country. Apart from achieving export earning objectives, EPZs have been making significant contribution to the gradual empowerment of women. This economic and social empowerment of women has afar reaching effect on the country’s poverty reduction initiatives and attaining MDG goals. As increasing number of young women are joining the productive workforce of EPZs migrating from poverty prone remote rural areas of Bangladesh, EPZs are deemed to as role models of linking the rural economy with the industrialization process. As a result of its outstanding...
success, BEPZA has already got much recognition from the different parts of the world.


The World Bank has ranked Bangladesh 20th out of 187 nations for investors’ protection, making it as the best in South Asian Region, (Doing Business, 2010)

BEPZA’s Website: www.epzbangladesh.org.bd has recently been awarded with the “Runner UP” position in the rating of World Free Zone Competition held in Hyderabad, India.

With world class business environment and tailor made benefit packages for potential investors, BEPZA welcomes foreign investors to take the opportunity of investing in the EPZs of Bangladesh and ensure the maximum return on their investments.

The writer is the Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA). The views expressed in the article are those of the writer and do not reflect the position of the Embassy or the Government of Bangladesh.
At the global level, on the issue of tackling climate change, the year 2010 started disastrously with the failure of the negotiations in Copenhagen, Denmark, at the fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2009, with the recriminations of that failure continuing well into 2010.

Fortunately, by the time of the sixteenth conference of parties (COP16) in December 2010 in Cancun, Mexico, some confidence had been restored and a positive, albeit much less ambitious, outcome was in fact achieved with the Cancun Climate Agreement being adopted.

One of the significant changes that occurred as a result of the failure of the negotiations in Copenhagen (and a reason for relative success in Cancun) was the realisation that a legally binding, all-encompassing agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol (which was what was attempted in Copenhagen) was likely to take several years to achieve and that a step-by-step series of smaller agreements was the more realistic option to take the process forward. This was in fact what was achieved in Cancun.

Another outcome was that the level of important actions on tackling climate change has shifted significantly away from relying on a top-down global agreement to be achieved first before actions at national and local level are taken.

Indeed, much of the action on climate change has shifted to the national and local level in all countries, both rich and poor. These actions are likely to play an important role in enabling a greater bottom-up thrust to reaching a global agreement by COP17 to be held in Durban, South Africa, in December 2011.
For Bangladesh, there are several opportunities during the coming year to play a significant role both at the global as well as the national level. I will highlight below three ways in which this can be done, two international and one national.

The first opportunity will be in March 2011 when Bangladesh will host the fifth International Conference on Community Based Adaptation (CBA5) to Climate Change, which will attract several hundred international participants including high level figures such as the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, the Chairman of the Adaptation Fund Board as well as senior figures from the headquarters of the World Bank from Washington, UNDP from New York and the Asian Development Bank from Manila.

This will put Bangladesh at the forefront of an extremely important area of adaptation, namely identifying, accessing and assisting the most vulnerable communities in the most vulnerable countries, which is a growing area of interest in the field of adaptation and is now known universally as CBA. Bangladesh has an opportunity to become a world leader in this aspect of adaptation to climate change. It is likely that a global initiative on CBA may be launched at this event in March.

The second opportunity at the international level is the possibility of hosting the third summit level meeting of the Climate Vulnerable Countries, which was initiated by President Nasheed in the Maldives in 2009 and was then held for the second time in Kiribati in November 2010 and hosted by President Tong.

Bangladesh has offered to host the third meeting sometime in November 2011. This will again be a tremendous opportunity for Bangladesh to host high-level ministers from around twenty vulnerable countries from Asia, Africa, island countries and Latin America, and enable these vulnerable countries to both share what they are doing to tackle climate change at home as well as make them more united in the international negotiations on climate change in preparation for COP17.

The third opportunity is at the national level in the implementation of the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), which is already being allocated funds from the National Climate Change Trust Fund from the government budget and will also attract donor funding through the Climate Change Resilience Fund being set up by the government with the donors.

While Bangladesh has rightly received much attention, and indeed praise, for taking these proactive steps, the onus is now on the government to implement them in a transparent and effective manner. Given that tackling climate change is a new subject and we still have a lot to learn about what works and what doesn’t, it is inevitable that mistakes will occur in the implementation of some of
the activities.

It is vital that the government does not try to deny or hide such mistakes, but rather accepts them when they occur and take corrective actions. Only then will we be able to make effective use of the financial resources being allocated for implementing the national climate change plans.

Let me end by outlining some ways in which this can be made more effective. First, the government should make transparency of information of paramount importance by putting all contracts awarded (including their budgets) on to the dedicated BCCSAP website and also require all funded projects to provide six-monthly progress reports, which should also be put on the website to enable others to see what is happening.

Second, the all-party Parliamentary Standing Committee on Climate Change should convene meetings to regular ask the ministries and NGOs involved in implementing actions to submit reports to the committee (which should also be put on the website).

Finally, the scrutiny of actions by media and civil society must be encouraged and enabled and not resisted and thwarted. Only by making sure that resources are being spent well and that we are indeed learning lessons as we make progress will we be able to gain the confidence of the public as well as the international community that Bangladesh deserves further support.

Indeed, henceforth, the amount of financial resources that will flow from the global level to the national level will not just depend on making pleas at international fora such as the COPs but rather on the level of performance of the countries. Those countries that are able to demonstrate performance (including robust in-country monitoring and evaluation systems) will attract more funding from the international level. Bangladesh has an opportunity to be a leader amongst them.

The writer is Senior Fellow at the London based International Institute for Environment and Development and also Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University. The views express in this article are those of the author and are not those of the Embassy or the Government of Bangladesh.
1. ‘We the People of Bangladesh’

The very first line of the Constitution of Bangladesh is perhaps often overlooked by us. But it merits great concentration. It runs as follows: We, the people of Bangladesh, having proclaimed our independence, on the 26th day of March 1971 and through a historic war for national independence, established the independent, sovereign People’s Republic of Bangladesh. This opening word of the constitution is a historical undertaking to secure to every citizen justice and empowerment in its ampler dimensions---political, social and economic. The glorious dimensions of our constitution are: Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Social Justice and Democracy.

Why we declared independence? The reasons are sacredly embodied in the Proclamation of Bangladesh Independence. We declared independence, as a response to savage war, unprecedented genocide, atrocities and torture committed by the then Pakistani authorities. We proclaimed independence in order to ensure people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice. The people of Bangladesh became rebellious as a last resort at the disregard and contempt for human rights and against tyranny and oppression, and achieved independence.

This is the cardinal reason why human rights matters for a country like Bangladesh. It is true that we extracted ourselves free from the tyranny and oppression of our neo-empirical masters, but were we able to emancipate ourselves from the fetters that still string our minds? If we did, then why the last four decades have achieved tinkering and missed engineering of human rights and perpetuated the alienation of the spirit of liberation war with the journey of constitutionalism? It seems that the legal transformation, governance populization and judicial humanization could have been wrought in the last forty years responding to the summons of the constitutional pledge.
2. The Liberation War: The Root of Our Understanding of Human Dignity

Poet Shukanto once wrote, “Shabaash Bangladesh e prithibi obaak taki-e roy, jole pure more chharkhar tobu maatha noabar noy” (Bravo, Bangladesh! The world stands startled; It would rather spare, die being ablazed, burnt; yet it would bow down its head to nobody!). Indeed, birth of Bangladesh as a Sovereign Republic in 1971 was one of the remarkable events of the world history in the last century. Probably, Bangladesh is the last country to be in the series which has secured independence in the past few decades through a national liberation war.

Hardly there is any country in the world as that of Bangladesh whose birth has been so orderly and legitimate at any consideration. People of Bangladesh have shed their blood in the battle field as well as they have ensured the compliance of all the norms and principles of international community through their duly elected plenipotentiaries. The formal proclamation of independence legitimized the war and created the platform of securing international attention.

People of Bangladesh fought for due fulfillment of their legitimate right of self-determination in 1971. Self-determination was the phrase used by the proclamation of independence. Bangladesh fulfilled the criteria of a populace by its commonality in history, language, culture, ethnicity and other manifestations of shared identity and experience, numerosness etc. That was why the insertion of this right in the proclamation was significant in the sense that this is a right which denotes the right of a people to determine their own political status and economic, social and cultural development. It is appealing to note that Bangladesh ripened this right into harvest after the insertion of this right by two famous international documents, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). In brief, Bangladesh got liberation with a view to obtain the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness ensured and economic emancipation achieved.

3. Constitutionalism and Democracy

The journey of constitutionalism and democracy in Bangladesh has often stumbled and the country has witnessed military ruling for considerable period of nation’s life span. The constitution was made subservient to martial law and that was the instrument of people’s right and dignity. Though democracy was restored in 1990, we are yet to pluck the fruit of parliamentary democracy.

Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd v. Government of Bangladesh and Others, popularly known as 5th Amendment Case marks the beginning of a new era in our constitutional dispensation. Delivered by Mr. Justice ABM Khairul Haque, the style and content of the judgment of this case would have a lasting influence in the future course of constitutional jurisprudence of Bangladesh. In this case, the court had to hear the arguments of existence of martial law jurisprudence developed by courts over the time. The court unequivocally turned down any existence of such martial law describing its impact upon country’s polity: “If the Constitution is wronged, it is a grave offence of unfathomed enormity committed against each and every citizens of the Republic. It is a continuing and recurring wrong committed against the Republic itself. It remains a wrong against future generations of citizens.” Fifth Amendment is the case by which a nation has turned back to its right track of lofty ideals for which the nation emerged as an independent state. It is interesting to see how Bangladesh as a nation can once again works to perpetuate the thirst for constitutionalism and democracy. Inn line with the Fifth Amendment Case, another vile of the constitution the Seventh Amendment, which validated another martial law regime of General Ershad.

Through the annulment of Fifth Amendment and Seventh Amendment by the Higher Court of Bangladesh the original character of Bangladesh Constitution is revived. The constitution has regained its secular character and constitutional supremacy is said to march with fame. One final note about Fifth Amendment and Seventh Amendment case-after the verdict of these two cases the media were vocal in commenting that the judiciary has expiated its past deed of approving martial law by throwing the sordid chapter
away to new constitutional philosophy. This constitutional spirit is important to evaluate the rule of law, democracy, human rights record of a country. For, unconstitutional exercise of power by the state mechanism is the dominant cause of human rights violation.

4. The Present Human Rights State of Affairs

The present Awami League government enthroned the power by a rallying people mandate in general election two and half years back. People reposed mountain equal expectation upon this government. After two years of assumption of powers the performance of the government is being evaluated by all and sundry of the society. A sweeping generalization that the government has failed to fulfill its commitment is a notion based on immaturity and misleading perception. Establishing a society free from corruption, institutionalization of democracy and rule of law, building a culture of human rights and ensuring socio-economic emancipation of the people was and is the firm commitment of the government.

The human rights record of the present regime is to be understood in the light of an environment full of free media, vigilant civil society, human rights institutions. We are a democracy where democratic values, principles of good governance, conditions of an egalitarian society are still in the nascent stage in many aspects. Against the undeniable factual deviance of human rights and freedoms, the government has showed its commitment to uphold the dignity of human being by taking responsive and corrective measures. The stand of the present government is also to be evaluated against a bitter past where rights of the people to choose a representative government was seriously jeopardized by successive regimes. The government has improved the corruption index by enacting and implementing the much awaited right to information law. The education system is marching with fame towards establishing an aware and able society, the rights of the toiling masses are being promoted, protected and safeguarded by the pro-people economic policy, the labour rights have been addressed by raising the wages of the workers, the women rights are being given a place of prominence by economic and political empowerment and social security packages. The main positive thing with the present government is that the government is ready to learn from its faults and correct itself, by taking cognizance the adversary voices. The AL led government has contributed to create and nurture a dependable democratic polity in Bangladesh by ensuring the free elections at national and local government level under a political government and bagged praise for coming out from the melancholy record of rigging in elections.

However, the human rights organizations, national and international, have found violations human rights and have depicted a discouraging picture of human rights situations in the country. While reports should not be in a manner to vindicate the narrow interest of a particular group, it is submitted that attainment of the peak of standard of human rights is an enduring effort which can’t be achieved without certain pre-conditions, existence of an egalitarian society, for example. The due process of law in the trial of war criminals has been a matter of discussion, nationally and globally. The deaths in safe custody and extra-judicial killings have been concerns for many quarters which need a careful and detailed perusal from our perspective.

5. Human Rights Challenges

We try to understand and advocate human rights in a society where remedy against rights violation is taken merely in a judicial justice sense. Administration reshapes but the justice system continues with the same judges, same lawyers, same laws, same procedures and perceptions. When we see the cry for medical justice, gender justice, juvenile justice, disablement relief justice, environmental
justice, rehabilitative justice, economic justice and housing justice, we understand in what vacuum we do live in. So, the test for the Republic of Bangladesh is to turn the denial and deprivation of rights into a creative alertness and shame the injustices with crucial exposure to the curative sunshine of public debate.

The dawn of each day presents a new challenge to the human rights defenders, as human rights situation dwindles everyday; solution fades in the light of new thinking and applications. The future represents a unique challenge for the justice delivery system to make an imprint in history where challenges are opportunities that call national institutions to set a standard for generations to come.

Religious fundamentalism sometimes appears as a barrier in materializing women’s right equality and liberty. This is a sensitive area where Bangladesh society has to vigilantly work on. A law calling for women’s access to justice, economic emancipation and political empowerment does not go unchallenged by religious precincts. Compromise is always there, though secularism is said to be restored in the state principles.

When we speak about state of human rights from developing world’s perspective we should not overlook the poverty of our people and poverty of the legal system itself. The expensive legal system in Bangladesh is colonial in nature, and it is only by magic of phrases rights of the litigants can be restored by pro-colonial law. The common man was hardly the concern for the court system during colonial regime of Britain and Pakistan, and we are still nurturing up the legacy. The very expensiveness of the litigations is vaunted as an institutional virtue by which the poor are priced out of judicial precincts. Their causes are refused visa, thus saving the court premise from being soiled by frivolous litigation. The poor man’s presence is irrefutably assumed to be frivolous. Any talk of human rights would be a rhetoric without addressing the issue of poverty and access to justice of the common man.

6. The Human Rights Commission

The rejuvenation of the NHRC in June 2010, is an ample example of the present government’s commitment towards human rights agenda. The NHRC is interested to exploit this commitment fully for the benefit of the country’s human rights record. The potential strength and effectiveness of the Commission lies with the fact of enabling legal framework. The NHRC Act 2009 incorporates the elements for effective functioning of the Commission which is readily accessible to the public; promotes and protects the interests of society and clearly defines the jurisdiction and adequate investigatory and remedial powers. Therefore, the Commission has reason to be optimistic---optimistic to have the faith on the political will of the present government. Ratification of international treaties, for example, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Statute, is nothing but a manifestation of will of the present government towards peace and security and its firm renunciation of the culture of impunity.

Restoration of original principles of the constitution (democracy, secularism, nationalism, socialism) in the light of judicial observation and parliamentary scrutiny have provided an ample environment of practicing the general law of freedom and dignity. The higher judiciary of Bangladesh is being described as more pro-active than any time in the past. A bunch of pro-active judges in the apex court are rendering pro-people judgment on the issues like custodial death, extrajudicial killings,
ethnic rights, restoring secular character of the constitution, environment, freedom of press, fatwa etc., which in turn has extended an opportunity for the NHRC to work in a larger canvas of freedom and justice.

The mass-media seems to be vibrant in revealing breach of human rights, assisting NHRC in creating a culture of human rights, moulding public opinion on diverse issues i.e. extra-judicial killings, environment issues, ending the culture of impunity, discouraging any further military takeover of the state-power, ethnic right and sensitization on minority issues and so on. It is evident that the media, civil society and the people at large want to see a lively and dynamic Human Rights Commission. They are ever prepared to provide support to the activities of the Commission. This would in the final count be the main source of strength and inspiration of the Commission. The vigor of the Commission coupled with the cooperation from all quarters can turn its recommendatory powers to something having ‘immense substantive value and impact’. The present NHRC is being widely acclaimed and hailed by the human rights organizations, hence in a better position than ever-before to work for protection and promotion of human rights.

7. Conclusion:

How can we march forward? How can we make the democratic and human rights institution meaningful for us? Law reform and development of political answer can be one of the answers, if not the sole. How much the task is difficult? Let me resort to a simple metaphor; attempting to reform the law and political culture is like attempting to make a sheet of corrugated iron flat with a hammer. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, the leading framer of Indian Constitution made a cautionary note on the eve of adopting the constitution of India which is very pertinent for Bangladesh also: “Will history repeat itself? Will the Indians place the country above their creed? Or will they place creed above country? It is not certain. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost for ever.” Consolation is that faith, hope and promise are the tenets of our human rights record. Our idealism and efforts binds us firmly and a humanist cause brings us together. This facet of our polity is our strength to search for a solution to our social justice problems and to achieve a society where ‘fundamental human rights and worth of human’ persons would be secured for all citizens.

The writer is the Chairman, National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not reflect the position of the Embassy or the Government of Bangladesh.
US-Bangladesh a Deepening Relationship
- Tara Ashraf and NESA Center staff and Faculty

The United States and Bangladesh have enjoyed a close relationship since Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971. In fact, the United States established formal diplomatic relations with the young country within the first year. In the intervening decades, that relationship has matured and strengthened. James Moriarty, U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh since 2008, summed up the relationship of the two states as “Democracy, Development, and Denial of Space for Terrorism.”

In March 2000, President Bill Clinton became the first U.S. president to visit Bangladesh, an event Clinton correctly referred to as “the beginning of a stronger partnership.” Other senior U.S. officials followed suit, including then Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2003 and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in 2004. Reciprocal visits by senior Bangladeshi leaders have been an integral piece of our strong bilateral ties.

A few quick examples of Ambassador Moriarty’s comment:

In a typically non-democratic section of the globe, Bangladesh is one of the few Muslim states that regularly holds free and fair democratic elections for people to choose their leaders.
While visiting a U.S. Government-supported shelter in Bangladesh that works to rehabilitate female victims of human trafficking In March of this year, Robert O. Blake, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, said that, throughout his visit he was reminded of “the strong progress Bangladesh has made across a variety of fronts: economic development, counter terrorism, and regional partnership.”

Secretary Blake noted: “Bangladesh is one of a select few countries in the world that is partnering with the United States on the four Presidential initiatives: global health, food security, global climate change, and engagement with Muslim communities.”

Complementing its dedication to democracy, Bangladesh has been proactive in efforts against terrorism. Drawing on a strong national identity and a moderate Islamic tradition, Bangladesh has consistently proven to be force for good and symbol of stability in the region.

Bangladesh has limited domestic extremism, addressed issues of terrorist financing through money laundering, and invested resources in strengthening border controls. Efforts such as these make Bangladesh an inhospitable environment for would-be terrorists.

**Economy and Trade**

Bangladesh’s economy has not only weathered a recent worldwide recession, but has strengthened its underpinnings, claiming its place as the third largest exporter of apparel after China and Turkey; its top trade partner is the European Union. The country has a robust political economy and a wealth of natural resources, including abundant water and reserves of natural gas. Access to water and rich, fertile land provide many Bangladeshis the resources they need to produce abundant harvests of rice, jute, maize, and vegetables, but they do not come without a cost. The county’s geography makes the country vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change, including the flooding that nourishes the earth. However, Washington and Dhaka have frequently collaborated to minimize negative impacts of these natural disasters on Bangladesh’s population.

**United States Agency for International Development**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has helped foster sustainable development in Bangladesh, through providing food security, plans, and direct assistance. Moreover, USAID has partnered with Bangladeshi communities to establish eco-management systems to protect the sustainability of Bangladesh’s natural resources. These conservation efforts have not only developed more environmentally friendly production, but they also have improved the quality of the agricultural and horticultural yields.
In addition to providing help and succor following natural catastrophes, USAID has provided leadership in disaster preparedness and infrastructure support. The agency also provides emergency preparedness plans and emergency supplies to roughly 3,500 of Bangladesh’s most at-risk villages.

USAID also assists with implementing long-term plans to raise incomes, improve health, and improve food security. One of USAID’s most enduring and beneficial contributions to Bangladesh was the distribution of electricity in rural areas. In 1971, only 3% had electricity; today, 44% of the population enjoys the advantages of electric power, partly thanks to U.S.-Bangladesh cooperation.

Planning for emergencies and providing humanitarian assistance are of limited duration. With an eye to the future, USAID has made education a priority, allocating grants to 1,800 preschools and learning programs to address a range of issues from poor attendance, low achievement, and high dropout rates, to a below-average literacy rate. USAID also helps facilitates access to low-cost, high-quality family planning services, maternal and child health care, and tuberculosis treatments.

Assistant secretary Blake observed that “Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in advancing toward its Millennium Development Goals, especially in maternal and child health. The U.S. Government, through our development agency USAID, will be working with the Government of Bangladesh to craft innovative and country-driven initiatives that will improve the lives of all Bangladeshis.”

**Multilateral Support & Assistance**

The United States also has provided humanitarian assistance when floods and other natural disasters wrought havoc on the country. For example, after Bangladesh experienced devastating floods [in 2005], the United States donated 700,000 metric tons of food grains, and the US Navy’s hospital ship Mercy provided efficient, effective medical treatment to thousands of Bangladeshi patients.

When Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh in 2007, USAID was one of the first international responders, providing $19.5 million for food and relief supplies and sending two fully crewed U.S. Naval vessels, saving an estimated 200,000 lives.

As Assistant Secretary Blake pointed out in his March visit, Bangladesh also is offering assistance to other countries, recently sending a team of cholera experts to Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated that county.

In more strategic terms, the U.S. committed $2.2 million to purchase Defender class boats for the Bangladeshi Coast Guard and allocated $934,000 for International Military Education and Training.

For its own part, said Assistant secretary Blake, “Bangladesh plays an important role in furthering peace and stability, both within its borders and across the region.”

“Bangladesh,” he observed, “is the number one contributor to UN peacekeeping efforts, and BRAC and other civil society groups are playing a significant role in Afghanistan.”
Bangladeshis living in US

In the 1960s, a surge of Bangladeshis emigrated to the United States for political and economic reasons. While maintaining close ties to their native land, many of them have flourished, academically and professionally, in their adopted country. While the 2000 census counted 57,412 people identifying themselves as having Bangladeshi origin, many believe that actual population of Bangladeshis living in the U.S. is somewhere between 70,000-140,000.

Education

Nearly half of Bangladeshis over the age of 25 hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher. With 98 Bangladeshi military and civilian officials among its alumni, the Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., is proud to be among the organizations providing education and training.

The NESA Center hosts seminars for security professionals and leaders from all over the world, its mission, to enhance security in the Near East and South Asia by building sustained, mutually beneficial relationships; fostering regional cooperation on security issues; and promoting effective communications and strategic capacity through free and candid interaction in an academic environment. Participants are drawn from 25 countries from across the Middle East and South Asia.

Alumni from The People’s Republic of Bangladesh have been an integral element in the success of NESA’s programs, their contributions to dialogue an invaluable resource. Two NESA alumni are currently posted to the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington, D.C., and at several members of the NESA faculty have enjoyed multiple visits to Bangladesh and at this writing, the Center’s director, Ambassador James A. Larocco, is about to lead a delegation to visit officials in Dhaka.

One NESA professor remarked that “the United States is impressed by [Bangladesh’s] empowerment of women and its courageous stand against extremist violence.” Another referred to Bangladesh as a “dynamic country, with interesting people doing interesting things.”

Bangladesh has been a constant and reliable partner to the United States, promoting democracy, denying terrorists a safe haven and developing a better future for its people.

The Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies is the preeminent U.S. Government institution for building relationships and understanding in the region. Tara Ashraf and NESA Center staff and Faculty contributed to this article. Tara Ashraf is an outreach associate at NESA. The views expressed are those of the contributors of the article and are not those of the Embassy or the Government of Bangladesh.
Introduction:

Since 9/11, South Asia’s strategic outlook has changed dramatically due to various factors: revived strategic relations between the US and India, emergence of cross-border terrorism, a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, continued political instability in Nepal and Pakistan, and the lack of a strong regional role of many of the South Asian countries. South Asia is a region comprised of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, accounting for nearly 23 percent of the world’s population. With its huge market and labour force, vast investment opportunities and enormous potential for trade expansion, South Asia has emerged as one of the fastest growing regions in the world. However, nuclearization, the bitter rivalry between India and Pakistan, the rise of terrorism as a consequence of religious extremism, ethnic and nationalist clashes, separatist movements and economic deprivation and the fragile situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan pose serious challenges for the region. Be that as it may, the potential and hope for change remains, in particular, in respect of Indo-Pak relations. Should this materialize the opportunities for the region are immense and India would emerge as a global power.

Therefore, the twin phenomena of strategic peril and economic promise pose a daunting challenge, one that must be balanced for South Asia to be a peaceful and stable region in the world. Since the nuclear tests in 1998 by India and Pakistan, the focus on this region has been almost exclusively on the nuclear dimension of the confrontation between the two countries. However, the specter of regional security has risen from the nuclear issue to terrorism and has become one of the foremost security challenges facing the SAARC region collectively, in recent years. In reality, terrorism in South Asia is facilitated by the interplay of several factors operating at three different levels: domestic; regional or bilateral; and international. There is, in fact, a symbiotic relationship between these factors and terrorism...
Domestic Factors:

Since their independence, the states of South Asia have struggled to emerge from the vicious cycle of poverty, deprivation and under-development. Access to safe water, housing, education, health, employment and food security are the critical issues facing each of the South Asian countries. Economic deprivation, illiteracy, and unemployment provide a fertile ground for intolerance and extremism, which in turn promotes conflict and violence within the societies of South Asia. The region has been exposed to five types of intolerance: ethnic, communal, religious, sectarian and political. Consequently, tensions within the domestic sphere could have spillover effects in the region. South Asian states have not been able to meet these challenges due to their preoccupation with perceived external threats to national security, or alternatively by great power ambition pursued through domination over others or due to their mistrust of each other. As a result, the continuation of conflict in the form of terrorism persists, constraining each government's ability to fulfill the social demands and security.

Regional or bilateral Factors:

Most of the internal terrorist threats that plague South Asian states have a cross-border dimension, and many are inter-related. In recent years, we have witnessed the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, the long-standing civil war in Sri Lanka, the increasing use of Bangladesh territory by Islamist extremists, the proliferation of small arms, and the menace of drug trafficking; each of these problems has had a significant transnational dimension. Most of South Asia continues to grapple with the problem of dealing with terrorists and extremist organizations, as well as subversive elements based in their territories. It may be noted that the growth of regional terrorist movements has been linked with the willingness of some states to directly or indirectly sponsor campaigns of terror, often through proxies and other means. State sponsorship of groups has strained relations between India and Pakistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka. Similarly Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan continue to be afflicted by terrorism or the threat of terrorism both of a home-grown and transnational variety. Foreign support has also contributed to the heightening of the salience of national security concerns, aggressive nationalism and militarism in the region. It is evident, therefore, that South Asian countries have themselves encouraged and aided terrorism in neighbouring countries. As a result, cross-border terrorism has gained momentum in the recent years. The clearest example of this was in November 2008, when ten suspected LeT members launched a deadly three-day terrorist attack in Mumbai killing 166 people.

International Factors:

The escalation of terrorism in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan and India, suggests that these events could have been influenced by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the United States, and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although the US led ‘War on Terrorism’ was targeted directly at some specific states and
groups like Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the repercussions have been felt throughout the Muslim world. The ‘War on Terrorism’, far from fostering peace and stability, has made the world a far more dangerous place. Muslims in South Asia now feel more insecure and threatened than ever before. It is this sense of insecurity mixed with anger that has substantially bolstered the ranks of Islamist extremists in different parts of the world, including South Asia. Financing of both political and religious terrorist activities has become an important issue in the rise of terrorism in South Asia. Political terrorism occurs with direct and indirect patronage of the political parties, while funding for religious terrorism comes from both foreign and local sources. Reports have indicated that some of the Islamic militant groups had received funds through charities from the Middle East. In addition, such groups were aided by Muslim extremist organizations in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan and that these organizations had also received funds from the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, to carry out their activities.

Regional Responses to Combat Terrorism in South Asia:

To achieve success in combating terrorism in South Asian states, a comprehensive and cooperative framework is required in the spirit of SAARC Charter. Terrorism is primarily seen as a security issue in South Asia that requires military response. This is exemplified by varying degrees of use of force by all SAARC nations afflicted by terrorism. A significant step was taken when, in the 14th SAARC Summit in 2007, the Heads of State or Government had emphasized that terrorism was a threat to peace and security in the region. The Declaration of the 14th SAARC Summit resolved to work to combat terrorism and other transnational crimes. The following are the regional initiatives undertaken by the South Asian states regarding terrorism:

- Report on Study Group Meeting on Terrorism, June 12-14, 1986, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Second SAARC Summit in Bangalore, Nov. 17, 1986, Draft Declaration to Combat Terrorism.
- In the Eleventh Summit in Kathmandu (January, 2002), the leaders of the SAARC had taken a pledge...
• In the Twelfth SAARC Summit in Islamabad (6 January 2004), an additional clause was added to the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

• In the Fourteenth SAARC Summit in Delhi (5 April 2007), the Heads of State or Government agreed to work on the modalities to implement the provisions of the existing SAARC Conventions to combat terrorism, narcotics and psychotropic substances, trafficking in women and children and other transnational crimes.

• In the Fifteenth SAARC Summit in Colombo (3 August 2008), the Heads of State or Government agreed to work emphasized the need for strongest possible cooperation in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime amongst the relevant agencies of the Member States especially in the area of information exchange.

• In the Sixteenth SAARC Summit in Thimpu (29 April 2010), the Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to implement the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and its Additional Protocol and SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. They also re-emphasized the importance of coordinated and concerted response to combat terrorism.

In addition to the SAARC process, the seven member-countries, including Bangladesh, belonging to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) have discussed cooperating on combating terrorism. In December 2009, BIMSTEC members signed the ‘Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Trans-National Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking’.

**Combating terrorism: Tasks Ahead**

Bangladesh views terrorism as a regional issue that should be resolved in cooperation with other South Asian countries. When Sheikh Hasina, the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh, assumed office in January 2009, she advocated the formation of a regional taskforce to combat the menace of terrorism in the interest of maintaining security in the region. A collectively combined regional approach in dealing with the growing problem of terrorism has thus become an important factor. The people and governments of SAARC countries have a great stake in resolving the problem of terrorism which requires a collective approach. There is a need for collective action first in the containment and ultimately elimination of terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and the illegal movement of both weapons and terrorist elements.

The SAARC Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism adopted in 1987 together with additional protocol adopted during Islamabad Summit in January 2004 could provide a broad framework for collective action to deal with the problem of terrorism. The purpose of this Additional Protocol, which is in line with Security Council Resolution 1373, is to strengthen the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, particularly by criminalizing the provision, collection or acquisition of funds for the purpose of committing terrorist acts and taking further measures to prevent and suppress financing of such acts. In the 14th, 15th and 16th SAARC Summits, combating terrorism was high on the agenda. However, to implement the initiatives adapted in the last three SAARC Summits, the following strategies could be implemented:
“Collaboration among the South Asian states to coordinate actions against terrorism to ensure they are mutually reinforcing. In this regard, each state should establish national institutions and strategies to exercise authority over respective territories and fight terrorism where it exists.

“Coordinate, arrange and establish platforms by using all modalities i.e. diplomatic, economic, information, law enforcement, military, financial and intelligence to defeat and destroy terrorist organizations.

“South Asian states must adopt zero tolerance policy for terrorist activities within their borders. A SAARC based coalition of the willing is required in the following fields:
- Establish a regional anti-money laundering regime to curtail terrorist funding. Vast sums of money continue to be laundered through international channels. This money provides huge sums of virtually undetectable funds for arms trafficking and migrant smuggling;
- Expand law enforcement efforts, initiate an inter-state extradition treaty (where applicable) to capture, detain, and prosecute known and suspected terrorists;
- Coordinated and joint efforts, in terms of military capacities and intelligence, to defeat terrorist networks regionally;
- Establish an organization like Interpol (Sapol) with technical assistance from international institutions and organizations for information exchange and to eliminate the terrorist organizations. Efforts should also be made to develop joint training and technical capabilities to fight money laundering, gathering intelligence, etc.

“SAARC countries must collaborate to prevent terrorists from acquiring capabilities to use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons. Terrorists are developing new capabilities of attack and improving the efficiency of existing methods and weapons which South Asian counter-terrorism outfits need to keep up with.

“Specific anti-small arms proliferation regime should be established to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in South Asia. In this regard, there is a need to adopt a common approach towards arms and drug trafficking and organized crime.

“All SAARC states need to affirm adherence to UNSCR 1373, international counterterrorism conventions and protocols. This would reflect an enabling environment to combat terrorism in terms of the rule of law, good governance and democratic ideals.

Concluding remarks:

The cumulative effect of terrorism, if left unchecked, is detrimental to the survival of South Asia as a promising region in the international economic architecture. It is an undoubted fact that the escalation of terrorism has done great damage to the image and identity of many of the states of South Asia. If terrorism persists for long periods of time, the costs of combating terrorism will continue to mount. Keeping this in mind, to implement the above strategy an objective-based realistic action plan is required. It is countries like the United States which could be particularly supportive in such an area, as they are in the forefront of tackling international terrorism. In fact, the United States has, over the past few years, been a valuable
partner of Bangladesh in countering terrorism. It is also very important to engage in close cooperation with other members of the international community in fighting terrorism successfully with expert advice and adequate resources.

First, each of the states must adopt their national anti-terrorism strategy based on democratic and acceptable principles. The states will need to strengthen their national legislations to deal with the problem. In this regard, it is obvious that uniformity in various legal aspects would be required, i.e. to facilitate extradition.

Second, each of the states must have a clear definition of terrorism. On the basis of that South Asian states should agree to a common definition of terrorism. A regular joint consultation between the public and private sector should be facilitated to develop any strategy in this regard.

Third, in each of the states, political parties, civil society and the policy makers should give proper attention to the conditions that enable terrorism to thrive, including poverty, political marginalization and inequality, lack of proper education, and unemployment. Any campaign against terrorism in South Asia should involve restraint, the rule of law, and attention to the root causes of conflict that perpetuate terrorism.

Fourth, it is required to establish a common platform to share information on terrorist activities, money laundering, etc.

Fifth, education has been a controversial factor in the growth of terrorism. With the overall objective of upgrading the standard of primary and secondary education and imparting life skill, education should be relevant and inclusive; madrassa education in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh should be brought at par with mainstream education curricula.

Sixth, role of civil society and NGOs has become an important factor in dealing with terrorism. To improve the socio-economic activities, a good number of NGOs are now active in South Asia. Two of the world’s largest NGOs, namely Grameen Bank and BRAC, have proved their effectiveness in substantially improving the lives of people. Their expertise can be utilized in other countries of South Asia in improving the lives of people.

And seventh, a great asset in South Asia’s fight against terrorism is that the vast majority of people in the region are against any kind of terrorism. However, this aversion needs to be converted into active resistance through awareness campaigns and enlightened religious education in public places, including places of worship. The media should also be motivated to play a constructive role in the awareness campaign. While states should not compromise on the principle of free press/media, the media, in turn, should not compromise on objective reporting avoiding sensationalization.

Farooq Sobhan is former Foreign Secretary and currently President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. The views expressed in the article are those of the author and do not reflect those of the Embassy or the Government of Bangladesh.
Bangladesh is a little known and even less understood nation. More often than not the only associations that come to mind are those of floods, poverty and the impact of global warming. As the second decade of the 21st century begins, it is critically important from all facets of its developmental agenda for Bangladesh to change this perception to one more in tune with its current reality and future ambitions.

In many ways, being part of Asia which is the new economic engine of the world should provide for an excellent opportunity to attract much needed foreign direct investment in all segments of the economy. Given its large educated workforce and consuming class, cost competitiveness and export potential, it seems surprising that more global attention has

As the second decade of the 21st century begins, it is critically important from all facets of its developmental agenda for Bangladesh to change this perception to one more in tune with its current reality and future ambitions.

Branding Bangladesh - The New Asian Tiger
-Kapil Sethi
not been paid to the Bangladesh story.

The key to this lies in residual memory. In the absence of continuous and coherent message management, most people revert to the two or three words that have been associated with Bangladesh in their memory for a long period of time. When we say John Edwards or Bill Clinton, what two or three words come to mind?

This is why shifting the global perception of Bangladesh is a critical task for national policy makers.

Brand strategy which is traditionally applied to raise the competitiveness of products through changing consumer perceptions, is equally applicable to country branding. Looking at Bangladesh through the lens of a brand consultant, it provides an exciting opportunity to help a nation by elevating its perception amongst key audiences.

Whether it is manufacturing or tourism or education, when there is an overarching thought under which they operate, it becomes much easier for both the country and its audience to understand and work with each other.

As an example, if Bangladesh was to replace its earlier image as being “The basket case of Asia” with “The new Asian tiger” as a benchmark for all aspects of administration and governance, it could dramatically alter the future of the country.

All the performance benchmarks of different sectors would then need to be in line with this new objective, Legislative and regulatory norms would need to mirror Asian best practice. All achievements would similarly be protected as moves towards becoming the next Asian Tiger. It would also force policy makers to start evaluating the future of their respective areas of operation within this context. What would be the future of Biman if its primary objective was to help Bangladesh be the next Asian Tiger? Or that of GrameenPhone? Or that of the higher education sector? Or for that matter the Board of Investment (BOI)? The BOI, being a proclaimed one stop service for the potential investors, should be geared up to the needs of the day. Same applies to others who are placed to make a difference and transform Bangladesh into the new Asian Tiger.

The idea is not to pick a slogan out of a hat and throw money advertising or promoting it globally in order to change perceptions. If the rhetoric is not matched by reality, the chances are that the money will be wasted. It is far more pragmatic to adopt a thought that serves as both a performance as well as evaluative...
benchmark, try and live up to and deliver to that thought, and then use it to change perceptions. Done right, there is no reason why Bangladesh cannot take its rightful place as the next Asian Tiger.

*The author is a brand consultant and columnist based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The views expressed in the article are those of the author and are not those of the Embassy or the Government of Bangladesh.*
Glimpses of Embassy activities

[Images of various embassy activities are shown.]

Bangladesh Ambassador Akramul Qader presenting his credential to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Hon'ble Minister for Labour and Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment Engineer Khandker Mosharraf Hossain meets US Labor Secretary.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP. speaks after receiving award from the Asia Society.

Foreign Secretary at a meeting with Ambassador William J. Burns, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

Ambassador Akramul Qader with Congressman Mc Dermott.

Hon'ble Minister for Labour and Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment Engineer Khandker Mosharraf Hossain meets US Labor Secretary.

Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury with Melanne Verveer, US Ambassador-at-Large, Global Women Issues.
Glimpses of Embassy activities

Ambassador Akramul Qader with Congressman Phil Hare

Ambassador Qader with Congressman Crowley

Mobile Consular Service--Orlando

Ambassador Akramul Qader speaks on Bengali New Year Celebration

Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Shameem Ahsan speaks on the occasion of the National Mourning Day 15 August

Embassy observes National mourning day on 15 August

Ambassador Akramul Qader receives guests at the Armed Forces Day

Ambassador Akramul Qader speaks on the Victory Day Celebration
Glimpses of Embassy activities

Mr. Peter Blood speaks at the Embassy on the Victory Day Celebration

Mr. Monayem Chowdhury speaking on the occasion of the Victory Day

National Anthem being played during the Victory Day Celebration

Ambassador Akramul Qader speaks on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day

Ambassador Akramul Qader receives guests on the Independence and National Day

National Day Reception at the Embassy

Robert O. Blake, Assistant Secretary, South and Central Asian Affairs speaks at the Embassy on the occasion of the Independence and National Day

Cultural performance by the members of Embassy family on Victory Day
Glimpses of Embassy activities

Guests enjoying cultural program on Victory Day

Ambassador Akramul Qader inaugurates Deshi Mishti and Pitha Utshob

Visitors writing on Display Board during Deshi Mishti and Pitha Utshob

Cultural performance on the occasion of Martyr’s Day & International Mother Language Day

29 Cultural Program on Martyrs’ Day and International Mother Language Day

Performance of the Russian Cultural group on International Mother Language Day

Ambassador Akramul Qader with young award winners of Essay and Drawing competitions on the Life of Bangabandhu

Cultural performance by the members of Embassy family on Victory Day
Glimpses of Embassy activities

Celebration of the Pohela Boishakh at the Embassy of Bangladesh

Release of Report on US-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Relations at the US Chamber of Commerce

A High School Student group presents souvenir to Ambassador Akramul Qader

Ambassador Akramul Qader speaking at a community meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Ambassador Akramul Qader speaking at a presentation on climate crisis

Ambassador Akramul Qader with Mr. Lance Simmens, Climate Messenger of the former US Vice-President Al-Gore

Ambassador inaugurates solo painting exhibition of Mr. Khurshid Alam Saleem at the Embassy

Ambassador Qader welcomes members of Tufts University Alumni Association at the Embassy
Glimpses of Embassy activities

Embassy officials with students and faculty members of Maryland University and George Washington University

High School student group from China and USA visit Bangladesh Embassy

Members of Tufts University Alumni Association at the Embassy

Speakers at the Panel discussion under the World House Series organized by the Humanity’s Council and Bangladesh Embassy

Guests’ registration for the panel discussion under the World House Series organized jointly by the Humanity’s Council in the Embassy

Participants in Climate Talk in the Embassy

Bangladesh Embassy organizes a cultural show entitled Glimpses of Bangladesh Cultural Night

Spectators at Glimpses of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Cultural Night
ACI
Enabling Bangladesh through Quality and Technology

Advanced Chemical Industries Limited (ACI) is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh. Originally, it was established as the subsidiary of Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) in 1969. ACI’s mission is to enrich the quality of life through responsible application of knowledge, skills, and technology. ACI is committed to the pursuit of excellence through world-class products, innovative processes and empowered employees, to provide the highest level of satisfaction to our customers.

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EPZs of Bangladesh Bonanza for the Investors

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority offers a highly competitive package of fiscal & non-fiscal incentives and facilities to the investors. A few of these are:

**Facilities**
- Provides plot & factory building with all infrastructural facilities
- Offers one-window same-day service
- All customs formalities are done at the factory gate
- Import/Export and work permit are issued by BEPZA
- Support services and banking facilities are available
- Water, gas, electricity and telecommunications are available

**Incentives**
- No ceiling on foreign, joint venture & Bangladesh investment
- Tax holiday for 10 years and after that 50% rebate on export sales
- No dividend tax during tax holiday period
- Relief from double taxation
- Duty free import of machinery and equipments
- Duty free import of raw materials/export of finished goods
- Duty free import of construction materials
- Duty free export to DTA export-oriented industries
- Inter and intra zone exports permitted
- Sub-contracting inside and outside EPZs allowed
- Re-location of existing industries from abroad allowed
- 10% Sale permission to local market allowed except garments

Special Offer
More than 50% concession on rent both for plot and factory building in EPZs of Mongla, Ishwardi & Uutta (Nilphamari)

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority
BEPZA Complex
House # 19/D, Road # 6, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh
Phone: 88-02-8670530, 8650058, 8650068, 8650062, 8650061, 8650067, PBX: 8650059, Fax: 88-02-8650060, 8650063
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